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THE AMERICAN

NATIONAL PREACHER.

ORIGINAL—MONTHLY.

FROM

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SERMON CCCLXXXVIII.

BY REV. ERSKINE MASON, D. D.

PASTOR OF THE BLEECKER STREET PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, NEW YORK.

THE APPROACH OF DEATH A NEW YEAR'S SERMON.

"Behold I come quickly."—Revelations iii. 11. (First clause.)

The hopes, my brethren, which belong to you on the first Sabbath of a New Year, do not contemplate for yourselves a greater good than do the wishes of him who now addresses you. The object of your hopes may indeed be different from that which my wishes for you respect, but I am sure that you will not compare them, in point of intrinsic worth, or in regard to the certainty and permanency which characterize them respectively.

The state of the human mind, at a season like the present, is for the most part, one of expectation. We have done with the concerns of the old year, and we are awaiting the development of a new one; and turning down the page upon which our previous history has been written, and the lessons of experience have been recorded, we are giving licence to imagination to fill up the sheet upon which reality has not yet traced a letter. I am not wrong in supposing, that this page of the future, as it now appears to us, is full of scenes of joy; or, if in any case fear predominates over hope, the faint lines in which it traces its object, and the very undecided shading which it throws over it, stand in very strong contrast to the bold strokes with

which hope paints its visions, and the bright colors in which it sets them. It is a scene of earthly joy which our imagination is describing. We are filling up the prospect of the coming year with hours of comfort and peace, and with days of prosperity. There are no clouds about that earthly horizon, as hope presents it; and an imagination under the tutelage of hope troubles us with no dreams of coming sorrow, anxiety or painful changes. Now, my brethren, it cannot be denied that there is a degree of pleasure connected with many of those mental hallucinations to which men are exposed, during which reason is dethroned, and yet we always pity their subject as wholly unfitted, as well for the duties as the joys of real life; and who cannot see that however delightful to the mind may be the visions of a deceitful hope, there is an evil connected with its uncontrolled influence? Who cannot see that it must unfit us to meet any of those changes, those thousand nameless contingencies, which sober reason tells us must help to make up the future, as they have furnished the materials of the history of the past. Who, at least, cannot see its vanity, in view of one great event which we know to be certain, and which, yet, we are apt to throw entirely out of all our calculations? And, if I call your attention to that event to-day, it is only to render effective my wishes for your good. If I throw upon the canvass before you, in strong colors, death, in some of its most interesting associations, it is because that is an event whose certainty no earthly hope can destroy, whose rapidly approaching steps it cannot cause to linger, though it may tend to unfit us wholly for its experience. It is, then, with a view of preparing you for a higher, nobler, greater good, than any which your most rational, enlarged and sanguine earthly hopes contemplate, that I call you to-day to ponder, for a few moments, the message which the Son of God sends to each one of us—"Behold I come quickly." If the influence of the theme is salutary, we will dwell upon it, though its relations may be painful; if the draught which our physician mingles for us gives us the promise of returning health, we will drink it however bitter or nauseous it may be to the taste.

My subject, then, this morning, is death—and my object is to set it before you, in some of those aspects and associations which belong to it, and in the light of which it is calculated to exert a healthful moral influence over the mind.

It is far from my purpose, my brethren, to endeavor to establish the proposition that we must *die*—I would not insult your understanding by such an argument—are you not every day treading upon the dust of generations who have gone before you? Have you in your minds no remembrance and on your persons no emblems of mourning for friends whose eyes your own hands have closed? Has not disease already more than once shattered your own frames, and made you sigh over the

elements of death at work within yourselves? No, my brethren, we shall not undertake the proof of a proposition already so firmly established. And yet, though we may not deny it, we are certainly apt to forget it; or, if we do not forget it, we look upon it as a mere isolated fact, separate entirely from all those connexions and results which alone give it power over the human mind. Practically, death is a forceless thing; and we too frequently live as though Providence had given us a dispensation from its experience, and rendered us invulnerable to the shaft which must pierce every other bosom; or, to say the very least, we give the subject in our minds too little importance; neglect its application to ourselves, and act by it, as though familiarity with it had entirely changed its aspect, and taken away from it all its solemn relations and consequences. It is my business, then, to remind you of it; to secure for it your attentive consideration, in those views of it, which give to it its importance, and invest it with interest to man.

I. The first thought then upon which I would fix your minds, is the most obvious; death, is to separate us from this world, change our mode of existence, and break up all our present associations. There is, my brethren, an instinctive attachment to life, which God for the wisest purposes has implanted in our natures. We shrink back at once, no less from the thought than from the hour of our dissolution. Death is nature's most perfect abhorrence. There is something in the grave, the pall, and the winding sheet, something in the silence of that house appointed for all the living, something in the ravages to which our clay must submit, in the cold, damp, gloomy sepulchre, to which we never can be reconciled. Reason about it as long, and as much as we please, we never reason away its repulsiveness, set it in whatever light, and dress it in whatever garb we may, there is still the same appalling features standing out to the view. When we speak to you of death, we speak to you of the sundering of those ties which have bound that spirit to the tabernacle which it inhabits; we speak to you of that manly and vigorous form tottering to its fall; of that countenance becoming blanched, of that eye looking for the last time upon the objects in which you delighted, and then losing its brightness, and becoming glazed with the frosts of the tomb. No, God never meant that we should be reconciled to such thoughts and no influence can bring our feelings into harmony with such changes. Life indeed may have associations which render it insupportable, and which may drive a man to death, as a refuge from still greater evils; and the religion of the gospel of Jesus Christ as it presents in clear colors the bright scenes beyond the waters, may enable us to go down into the cold waves of that stream which separates us from yonder world of light and joy—but neither the concerns of the present life, nor the hopes of the life which is to come can even reconcile us to death, as

death—God forbid that they should do so, they should convert the tenants of this earth into suicides, and the world which they inherit into a charnel house.

It is not, however, a mere feeling of nature, which binds us to our present mode of existence. We are here living in a scene of constant excitement, as our thoughts and affections are engaged with the objects by which we are surrounded. We have our plans, our enterprizes and our hopes. What living man has not some link to bind him to this world—some association amid which he wishes to muse—some object which makes present existence desirable? We have formed our schemes, it may be, for earthly aggrandizement, and we are engaged in their execution; or we are busy with our plans which contemplate earthly honors as their results; or we are surrounding ourselves with a thousand earthly endearments, or we are mingling in scenes of joy, and painting the prospect of brighter joys to come. We know not, my brethren, how many, or how strong are the ties which bind us to this world, until they come to be sundered. But we shall very soon know, Whatever may be our plans, whatever the stage of their progress, death will terminate them; it will break up all our earthly associations however tender and interesting, and dissolve all our connections, shut us out from all these scenes, and put an extinguisher upen all these bright hopes.

The termination of any course of pleasurable action is painful; the last hour spent in familiar scenes, the last sight of objects upon which we have been wont to dwell with delight, always stirs up emotions of deep regret, even when we hope our separation from these scenes and objects is not to be perpetual, how much more painful must our feelings be when our adieu is an eternal one—when with our heads upon our dying pillow, we shall be forced to think, that yonder sun which has shone upon our pathway, shall to us, rise no more; our voice shall no more be heard among our fellows; the pursuits of time no more engage our attention, but while we are shut out from human view, the current of affairs shall run on as ever, and men shall tread upon our sepulchres, not knowing, or forgetting that we have ever been. It shall be so to all of us—Death will work out the demonstration of all I utter.

And yet these are the most unimportant and least interesting associations of the event, which we are now called to ponder. There is a connection between the present and the future, as there has been the past and the present. Life is but the first stage of our being; the second has yet to come. We are now but rehearsing the parts, which we are hereafter to act in an eternal scene. Conscience no less distinctly forebodes a judgment, than do the analogies of things foretell a future. This life, therefore, is not only the stepping stone to another, but the scene of preparation for it. Here are to be formed

characters which are there to be confirmed: here we are to authorize actions, which are there to be punished or rewarded. We do not stop to prove this point, the evidence of which is so clear and strong in every man's bosom, that he can neither escape nor stifle it.

Taking this view of life, death is a subject of intensely interesting thought to us, whatever may be our character and relations. If so far as our own personal interests are concerned, we are ready to abide its issues, so that death will not extinguish our hopes and blot out our joys; yet it will bring to a close all our opportunities of earthly usefulness. The very nature which God has given us shows most clearly, that he never designed we should live for ourselves exclusively. The social principle of our being, as it prevents men from occupying entirely isolated positions, brings them within circles of reciprocal influence. Every member of society acts upon some other member of society, and when God converts a man, he consecrates his social influence to sanctified ends. The constitution of society, as God has announced it, is wonderfully evincive of his wisdom. Religion breaks up no natural associations, and sunders no natural ties. It is easy to perceive that if a line, a palpable line of separation, were drawn between the religious and irreligious, if the order of society was such, that the moment a man became a Christian, all his connections must be dissolved, and new ones, purely religious in their character, formed, not only should the influence of the Gospel keep society in a state of constant revolution, and change, but the circle of religious influence should be very much circumscribed. As it is, "the salt of the earth" is much more generally diffused than at first sight we might imagine it to be. The line of spiritual separation runs through the nearest and dearest relationships of human life—human beings are linked together by the strongest ties of blood, affection and interest, who spiritually stand at a great remove from each other—whose sympathy mingle upon every other subject, save this one of religion. Were it otherwise, as in all probability it should have been, had the circumstances of men been of our arranging, we can see that the opportunities of Christian influence and usefulness had been very much diminished in number. Now there is not one of us for whom God has not opened channels in which his influence may run, and to whom he has not given opportunities for usefulness. There is not, probably, a single Christian whose relations do not furnish him with an ample field for Christian enterprise. And how, if we are the true disciples of the Son of God, can we be otherwise than thankful under the influence of the thought, that scarcely a day passes without furnishing us with some opportunity of doing good.

But, my brethren, death is, in this respect, to change our circumstances. Then all our influence is gone, as we are re-

moved from the sphere in which alone it can find room for play: and if there is anything which can embitter death to a child of God, when he may be confident of his own personal safety, it is the thought, that as he departs, he is leaving behind him some whom he loves, and whose state reproves his own unfaithfulness, and whom he must meet again, and whom he may meet at the judgment seat, unreconciled to God through Jesus Christ.

But, my brethren, if it should be otherwise with ourselves, so that we are not able, personally, to abide the issues of this trying hour, then death comes to blot out all our hopes, and to extinguish all our joys. It is so, because, now, and here, under the influence of the Gospel, the arrangement of Providence, and the dispensation of the Spirit, we may prepare for the world which is to come. No man who is out of Christ would ever disparage his present circumstances, by a comparison of them with a world of retribution. He feels that now there is hope, which then there will not be, and if his mind has anything like correct views of his position and relations, he can enter into the meaning of the poet as he sings

> "While God invites, how blest the day,
> How sweet the Gospel's charming sound."

But do we not know that death will change this scene. Are not our very circumstances, as they define our probation, constantly heralding their own change? Does not every Sabbath's sun, as it rises and sets upon us, tell us of the time when it shall rise and set no more? Oh! what a wonderous change will death make in a sinner's position. The light of this holy day, which speaks of hope, never breaks in upon the darkness of the sepulchre; nor does the voice of mercy's messenger interrupt its silence; nor do the movements of the Spirit disturb its deep repose; all that the human mind, in such a state, after death knows of hope, is embraced in the recollection of its former brightness and promise; all that it knows of means of grace and recovering influence, is found in the memory of their abuse and rejection.

While death thus blots out all the hopes of the unbeliever, it at the same time extinguishes all his joys. The facts upon the subject of human happiness in this world, are precisely the reverse of what we should have supposed they should be, reasoning solely from the character of God in ignorance of his plans and purposes. The actually existing state of things has more than once staggered human faith. "As for me," said the Psalmist, "my feet had well nigh slipped, when I beheld the prosperity of the wicked." It is not to be denied, that sinful man has many enjoyments in this world. It is perfectly idle to say, as we look over a festive circle and see the cheerful

countenances, and hear the merry peal and vivacious laugh, that there is no enjoyment there—the whole scene would contradict us. There may be some hearts concealed under those gay exteriors, but for the most part those who compose that circle, are for the moment in a state of pleasurable excitement. And so, too, abounding wealth and popular applause are sources of great happiness to unsanctified hearts, and such as judge only from outward appearances, are apt to look upon this world's votaries, as the monopolizers of enjoyment. We have, however, here only the front view of the picture; examine it more closely, and you will see in the background the angel of death advancing, and one and another of these figures moving through the scene, are dropping at his touch, and these happy souls in quick succession are exchanging all their hilarity and high excitement for the sorrows and the darkness of an eternal night. Thus the world is moving on, day after day, perpetually changing its phases. Thus end every day in more or less numerous instances, all the joys which the world can give. If we take this earth for our portion, it is our only portion, and however large it may be, it is soon to be wrested from us, and then the human mind is left to feed for ever upon reflection; and the only word of consolation, if consolation it can be called, which falls upon the ear, is this—"Son, remember that thou in thy life time receivest thy good things." "Death, what a melancholy day to those who have no God."

There is one more view to be taken of the subject before we have done with those of its relations and aspects which give it interest and importance. Death is but the coming of the Lord. The time, the circumstances, the manner of our departure, are not left to fate or lawless contingency. We are too prone to look at death solely as a natural event, something which takes place in accordance with a law of physical necessity. In one sense it is a natural event, as nature is sinful, but in every other sense it is the most unnatural event that takes place in God's Kingdom; and every man feels it to be so, and and his emotions in view of it, require some other explanation than such as the laws of nature furnish. We may talk like philosophers upon the subject, but we feel like men; and after all, this is the thought which gives death its power—it is the appointment of heaven—it is the coming of God to the soul. Do we doubt it? Need we be told by whose order death desolates all our joys? Can we for a moment harbor the supposition, that a universal law, whose operation no skill can evade, no power interrupt, to which there have been no exceptions, but such as have displayed the presence in his wondrous Sovereignty, of Him who alone can control his own laws, is the offspring of contingency or the creature of chance? Is the being in whose nostrils God breathed the breath of life, housed in the grave without his knowledge, and become the

food of worms without his order? No, brethren, it cannot be. The author of life must be the appointer of death. "He hides his face and we are troubled," he takes away our breath, and we return to the dust. He clothes the King of Terrors with his armor, assigns to disease its work, numbers our days and summons us away.

And why so terrible? Is it painful to part with earthly friends, earthly possessions, and earthly joys? It is. But yet the feeling is the same, whatever be our earthly circumstances and relations. Here poverty in its rags trembles—there wealth in its splendid attire crouches and weeps, and the proudest, loftiest spirit shivers through fear. Ah! death, as the coming of the Lord, is terrible; because man feels that there are enmities with which he has sported, and he is sensible of the painful reaction of his folly upon his own soul. There is a controversy managed by a being whose reasoning he cannot refute, even with that God who has appointed him to die, who in death revives the power of conscience, gives vividness to the memorials of the past, and a clear foresight of the future. "Death is the wages of sin," and sentence of "death has passed upon all men, for that all have sinned."

II. But secondly, the coming of the Lord is not only certain but it is close at hand. Our dying hour is very near. "Behold," says the master, "I come quickly." If death, viewed in its relations, should excite thought, the rapidity of its approach should add to its exciting power. That we shall die, we know, but when we know not; of this much, however we are certain, we must die ere long. We do not believe it. We calculate upon a long time in the future. Who, in this congregation, dreams to-day of dying soon, very soon. And yet upon this subject, the providence of God has taught us some very impressive lessons, and uttered them in very emphatic tones. Have none of us been called, during the last twelve months, to part with friends whose hopes of life at the beginning of the year were as bright as ours now are? Do my youthful hearers miss none from the circle of their companionship? They passed away, how quickly, and very soon death shall extinguish the lustre of that eye, and blanch that cheek of health, and consign that active frame to the stillness of the tomb. I hear a message coming from the graves of eight of those who composed this congregation twelve months ago. I know not for whom the message is designed, but I do know it is meant for some one within these walls to-day. Its meaning is very intelligible, its utterances are very distinct. My hearer, death comes space for you. Ere this opening year shall have completed its revolution, death shall have separated you from earth, its possessions, its honors, its hopes, and its joys; your dust shall return to the earth as it was, and your spirit shall go to the God who gave it. What a thought to ponder. If I never felt how

inadequate to their theme are human conceptions, and how powerless is human language, I feel it now. We are standing and communing upon the very verge of the grave, and in a few moments are all to burst upon the realities of judgment and eternity. What a reflection; how calculated to impress every heart, and awaken all the anxieties of the human bosom. Listen! oh my soul! listen! my dying hearers. It is the voice of our maker and judge. "Behold, I come quickly."

I must add one more thought to finish my subject. Death comes *suddenly*. How silently and surely he steals his march upon his unsuspecting victims. As in the dread hour of midnight, when all are wrapped in sleep, unconscious of his movements, insensible to his designs, dreaming of security and peace the thief approaches, "so shall the coming of the Son of Man be." Almost uniformly death takes men unawares. Even the wise virgins slept with the foolish until the midnight cry startled them. And it is always so with men whose portion is in this world. They are saying continually "Soul, take thine ease," "to-morrow shall be as this day, and much more abundant." They are very prudent—they have made their calculations with great accuracy, and they feel confident in view of their arrangements, that when death does come they shall be prepared; and accordingly, their minds are occupied with their plans, and their hearts with their prospective pleasures, and the world keeps them in a flurry of perpetual excitement; and when they have just matured some new enterprise, and start out with souls buoyed up by the hope of certain success, the King of Terrors meets them. Death—inexorable death—waits for the accomplishment of no plans, tarries for the enjoyment of no pleasures. Deaf alike to the voice of entreaty and the cry of dispair, it hurries away its victim from his unfinished enterprises, and his untasted, though anticipated pleasures, to the dread r[illegible]ities of the world which is to come. I would put the question to my hearers: Did you ever know a man who was not taken unawares, and that, notwithstanding all his warnings, though disease was strewing its victims around him, and shattering his own frame, though his tottering steps were every day foretelling his fall. And so he will come to you, "in such an hour as ye think not, the Son of Man cometh," is a truth which is yet to be illustrated in your experience.

There is not one of us, my brethren, who, whenever death approaches, will not be able to give many apparently very good reasons why he should not die. Yet we cannot, by argument disarm the King of Terrors of his power, nor by any reasoning, kindle his compassion. He has his work to do, and he does it, and does it often, in a way, and always at a time wholly unexpected. Yes, this is death; these are its relations, its circumstances and its issues.

Upon what fearful subjects, then, do we treat to-day, and

what solemnity they throw over the thoughts and associations of the present hour. Every thing upon which the mind fastens, seems to gather hues from a dying hour. This sanctuary is full of the intimations of death—this first Sabbath of a new year is heralding judgment.

And have I spoken the truth, my brethren? Have I said no more than the word of God commands, and the Providence of God instructs me to utter? And is it in reality so? Are these the circumstances and relations of our being? Must we die? Resign to others who labored not for it, the fruit of our toil? Be cut down, just when we had prepared for ease and comfort? Be torn away from the things of earth, its plans, its pleasures, and its hopes; and as though nature had nothing else to tell us but that we are dying creatures, must we be tortured every hour, be warned by every circumstance, as death obtrudes itself every where upon us, in our business, our retirement, our enjoyments, writing his summons upon our couch, inscribing vanity upon all we own, and all we ask—defeating our purposes, sporting with our plans, and while hope is gilding the far-stretched landscape of earth, substituting in its place a judgment whose awards are to be eternal. Yes, my hearers, it is even so. We do not ask you to admit the fact, but to consider it. One would think, that once admitted, we never could forget it—for can we imagine anything so foolish as unconcern about it? Any thing more irrational than in these circumstances to cling to life with a fondness which nothing but an everlasting possession can justify, and to merge all the vast interests of an eternal world in the comparatively trifling business of an hour? Why should we, my brethren, think so little of an event so awfully important? Why bury ourselves in earthly things, and leave this entirely out of our calculation.

I know there are seasons when men do think of it. The hour of death seems to have arrived, and then they feel its importance, and it presses with all its weight upon the unsanctified bosom, and they avow the concern they should have felt before. Ah! how often in these circumstances have been heard the voice of self-reproach—the prayer for indulgence—the promise of amendment—and then conscious guilt triumphs over every assurance of pardon, or false hope arrests inquiry and deceives the spirit, or stupor steals over the frame and deprives of reason. It is madness to postpone the thought of dying—it calls for our meditation now, the inquiries it starts demands our instant attention. Sport not with a theme so dreadful.

These reflections gather interest and impressive power from the rapid approach of that dread consummation which suggests them. It is, indeed, so, that before this year closes, some of us who are this day in the sanctuary, shall be numbered among

the victims of the fell-destroyer? What, then, can justify our hardihood? My youthful hearer, what means your presumption? Man of reason, why your folly? Why so credulous, so anxious about every thing else, so incredulous and unconcerned here?—here where facts are written as with a sunbeam before your eyes, as death walks all around you, clothed with omnipotence, regarding none of the distinctions which obtain among men, destroying alike the old and the young. the rich and the poor. Surely, there is enough in the message I bring, and ni the facts which enforce it, to alarm the most secure, and quicken the most stupid. Come, my unconverted hearer, ponder it well; gold and silver, houses and lands, earthly pleasures which command your attention, are all trifles compared with this subject of your studied and persevering neglect. The anxieties they kindle in your bosom, and the efforts they call forth, are all misplaced and misdirected, perverted and abused in your circumstances. Death, which is to tear you away from these objects, demands all the anxieties they awaken, and all the efforts they secure; death, at your very doors, claims your first notice, and if we are men of reason, capable of thought, and of distinguishing between good and evil, there is one message which will sink deep into our hearts, and possess all our souls—"prepare to die."

Oh! I am not wrong when under the influence of such reflections. I preach to you of death—death rapidly approaching. It would be well if it were written upon the walls of the apartment where pleasure leads on her revelries—upon the coffers in which the miser hides his gold, and if every breath of popular applause wafted its warning to the ear, I would let childhood learn it, and not suffer old age to forget it. It is a melancholy task I have to perform—a painful theme upon which I am called to dwell. But I come a messenger of God to the domain of death. The spirit of the Lord has sent me to walk among the bones which are very dry. I may be repulsed but I will repeat the warning, multiply the arguments, renew the entreaty. Forget them who may; undervalue them who may; despise them who may; I will be faithful to you, though you may be unfaithful to yourselves.

We have said that death was God's appointment. It is the coming of the Lord; do we really believe it? How strange the truth. He kindled the sun to light us on our way. He unlocks his storehouses, and scatters around us his varied beauties. What goodness marks his dispensations, what glory shines in his procedures. But death—anomalous death—bringing suffering and woe, burying in ruin the beauties we admire, and blighting our dearest joys; this, too, is the appointment of God. We may say, that we believe it—but our faith is a useless principle of a thoughtless mind, wholly inefficient for all purposes of moral activity, and foreign from every exer-

cise of right feeling. On what course correspondent to our conviction of the fact have we entered? In what practical habit has this thought been embodied? When so busily engaged in the affairs of the present world, to the exclusion of all considerations of the affairs of the world which is to come, do we really believe that death is the appointment of God? No! it comes we know not whence—commissioned by, we think not whom. It is a law of necessity, which prevents inquiry—a freak of fate of which there is no rational solution. Did we really believe that death was but the sentence of the eternal one, very different emotions should agitate, and very different plans should occupy our minds. Other views should attend us through the perplexities of the day; follow us to our nightly slumbers, be present with us in the place of prayer, give greater importance to the varieties, and another meaning to the joys and sorrows of life. Prove me this, and you have introduced me to a train of thought of high and awful character—thought which conveys a shock to the inmost soul, and fills it with emotions to which otherwise man must be a stranger. Did we but feel it as true, the awful secrecy in which he has wrapped up our destiny, would wrest from us all our fond, but false calculations, and make a matter of present interest the event whose considerations we postpone to future years. With what cautious step should we tread through a world which, on every side, presents to us the symbols of death. In what a prayerful frame should every change find us; how full our preparation to depart. How precious, then, should every Sabbath seem. We should not, then, so often speak to you in vain—argue without convincing—entreat without affecting you. Oh! my brethren you do not feel it because you do not believe it. You shut your ears when we declare it—you steel your hearts when we would urge it.

Oh! what an assembly have I been addressing; what solemn, fearful truths have I uttered. Brethren, beloved brethren, if I reproach you, it is in kindness—it is in the discharge of a duty, springing out of a relation which God has established between you and me, and over which, as a God of love, he himself presides; and you know that not without cause, I speak as I have done.

Death is the wages of sin; and can the sinner go cheerfully on, adding to his sin, to aggravate his death? Will he spend the last hour in thoughtlessness, and even while quivering on the verge of the grave, turn away from, perhaps the last admonition? Will he amuse himself with sin, and make profaned Sabbaths, a neglected sanctuary, and abused mercies his pastime? Oh, this is fearful trifling with the anger of an Omnipotent God.

God will come suddenly—he will break in upon all your schemes, and as you are running in the full chase after worldly

pleasures, throw in between you and the object of your pursuit his summons to judgment, to check you in your course and bring you away. The elements by which he means to affect your change, are even now at work in your bosom, imperceptibly to yourself, but they are shortly and surely to develop the fearful catastrophe—and if you can still be unconcerned, we can but retire to weep over ineffectual admonitions.

Do you ask me what you shall do? I preach to you, then, Jesus, "the resurrection and the life." I preach him to you, my hearer, for yourself, an able Saviour, and willing to save unto the uttermost. He hath borne your griefs and carried your sorrows. By his own death he has destroyed death, and him that had the power of it. Believe on him, and you shall share with him in his triumphs, and have part in the first resurrection. Do it at once. Renounce every false hope. Beware of the deceiver; he secretly lurks for thy soul. Reason not against the truth; stifle not your convictions; smother not your impressions. Believe not that the hope of the Gospel is the acquisition of an hour; the child of disease, the boon of death. Think not that reason must light up her lamp amid the storm which destroys you, and discover to you there the paradise of God. Think not that the angel of pity must compassionate your last agony, and give you a joyful hope. These are all deceitful, damning expectations, oh repeat them no more to a convicted conscience. They will serve but to hush you to a deeper sleep, and render more fearful the crisis when it shall arrive.

Brethren, my warning is concluded. My message, perhaps, may be ineffectual; its impressions may die away with the sound of your speaker's voice. But of this I am sure: If it has been received with the same interest with which it has been prepared and uttered, the scene of the judgment will show that it has not been spoken nor heard in vain. We leave its results, then, to the developments of that solemn scene.

SERMON CCCLXXXIX.

BY REV. DAVID MAGIE,
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THE MINISTRATION OF THE SPIRIT.

"Shall not the ministration of the spirit be rather glorious."—2 CORINTHIANS 3 : 8.

Nothing seems to reach perfection at once. In the visible, material world, we see first the blade, then the ear, and after that the full corn in the ear. The acorn grows into a majes-

tic oak, with its branches outspread, and its top looking boldly up to the skies. A cloud appears, and it is not bigger than a man's hand, but increases until the heavens are black, and there is a sound of abundance of rain. The mighty river may be traced to an insignificant spring, silently oozing out of the mountain's side.

Thus, also, is it in the moral and intellectual world. We witness, everywhere, a beginning, a progress, and ultimate development. The mind is so constituted that all its attainments whether of knowledge or of virtue, must be made by degrees. It is impossible for every part of any given science to be comprehended at a glance. There are successive steps to be taken and these steps have to be taken from points already gained, and acquisitions already made. No one is found to become either very wise, or very good, of a sudden. Advancement is the divine law, inscribed indellibly everywhere, and controlling all creatures and all events.

The history of the church of God is but an expansion of this one idea. It was not deemed meet that everything should be revealed and brought to its present state of clearness or perspicuity at first. There was progression even here—Adam was not told all that was subsequently told to Abraham; nor had the father of the faithful as much light as Moses enjoyed. David had discoveries still more perfect; and Isaiah and Daniel were carried yet further on. But none of these men saw things as fully, and with as much distinctness, as did the great Apostle to the Gentiles. Theirs was the dawn—his was the perfect day.

Everything, from the commencement, has been looking onward. Originally, and in the infancy of the world, nothing more was done than to throw into the mind a few leading essential truths. Thought was excited—expectation was awakened—heart was impressed. Enough was revealed to secure the believer's salvation, but not to render the man of God perfect, thoroughly furnished unto every good work. A foundation was laid, yet the superstructure was not completed. The light became more and more distinct, until it shone out, with the unclouded brightness of noon, upon the beloved John, in the Isle of Patmos. This finished the vision.

God has not spoken since that hour. Now the volume of inspiration is complete, and not one more chapter or verse is ever to be added while the world stands. The last and the grandest development of the purposes of divine mercy towards our fallen race, has been made. In this respect we stand upon the shoulders of all that have gone before us. Ours may be called the mature age of the church. The times appointed of the Father are come. We are no longer under governors and tutors.

Such, evidently, was the view of Paul. Turn to the chapter

which contains the text, and weigh the remarks he here makes, in connection with other and similar portions of the sacred volume. See what he says of the unrivalled excellency of the times, which had then commenced. There is one great thought filling his mind. His attention is fixed upon the blessed Spirit already just given, and afterward to be given still more plenteously. This, next to Christ's death, he regarded as the best of all God's favors. It was the end, the completion, the glory of all previous and repeated manifestations.

The passage before us is one of a very striking character. It speaks of the days when the Spirit was to be poured out from on high, largely and copiously, as possessing a peculiar honor and value. This is the point we are to discuss. Three questions arise—What is the ministration of the Spirit?—With what is it here compared?—and, Why has it so distinguished a glory? The answer to these inquiries will prepare the way for some useful inferences.

I. First—What are we to understand by the ministration of the Spirit?

This we shall best find out, by marking how the writer interprets his own language. No minister of the gospel ever magnified his office more than Paul did; but he magnified it, be it remembered, mainly and preeminently because he was a minister of the New Testament, and not of the Old. It was his privilege, not to rest in the letter which killeth, but to be filled with the Spirit that giveth life. In a word, he preached in the midst of revivals of religion, and his labors were accompanied by an influence which brought multitudes out of darkness into marvellous light, and from the power of Satan unto God. What, therefore, could he mean by Ministration of the Spirit, but his own favored times, and the times which were to follow? This is, doubtless, what he referred to; and the period embraced by it reached back over the few years which had elapsed since the death of Christ, and forward through all intervening ages, until the end of the world. It took in what we term the evangelical economy—it included these latter days.

We put, I beg you to notice, no forced construction on the Apostle's words. It is impossible to give them any other intelligible import. Our times, beginning with the era of Christ's ascension, and extending until his second coming, are here denominated the *Ministration of the Spirit*, and are so denominated because the Spirit is now given with a power and shed down with a fulness never known before. These are the days of the Son of man—this is the season for the display of God's convincing and converting grace. During this period especially, is it that the kingdom of truth and righteousness is to prevail on the earth. Pompous external rites have given place to deep internal influence. Altars have been forsaken,

and sacrifices have ceased; but in lieu of them, we have the Holy Spirit applying to thousands of hearts the efficacy of the Saviour's atoning blood. Moses is no longer read in the synagogue, but Christ is preached in the church. The priest does not burn incense in the temple, but Jesus intercedes in heaven.

Yet, mistake me not. There never was a period when the agency of the Divine Spirit was wholly unknown. The church which Jesus bought with his blood, is not only one in all places from the rising to the going down of the sun, but is one too in all ages, from Adam to Malachi, and from Matthew to the sounding of the last trumpet. In the days of our first parents, the God of heaven set up a kingdom, and that very kingdom still exists. Its outward ritual has been changed; its form has been altered; but it is the same church now it ever was, having the same God and Father of us all—the same Lord Jesus Christ, and the same Holy Ghost. There was a household of faith in the days of Enos, when men began to call on the name of the Lord. Noah, and the believing members of his family belonging to this spiritual kingdom, when they went into the ark and when they came out of it. And here all the Patriarchs had their membership. Never has there been an age without converted men, and men have never been converted without the spirit of God.

Truth enough was given, and influence enough was felt from the first to save the soul. The gospel was exhibited then only by shadows and symbols, but thanks to God, it was the same gospel, and sinners were brought to believe and obey it, by the very same power which is now exerted to take away the heart of stone, and give a heart of flesh. There is a difference; but it is a difference in the degree and extent, and expansiveness of the influence, rather than in the nature of the influence itself. *Our* times are the *Ministration of the Spirit*, not because his power was not felt in the days of Ezra and Jeremiah, but because it was more deeply felt in those of Paul and Edwards. This blessed season began at the feast of Pentecost, and it will last until the earth is filled with the glory of the Lord.

In the very midst of this privileged period, it is our happy lot to live. The Spirit has been given to abide with the church for ever, to dwell as a Comforter in the bosom of the faithful, and to convert sinners to God; and he has thus been given *because Jesus has been glorified.* This is the grand reason. The Saviour died to redeem men from the curse of the law; but he revived and ascended up on high to procure for them the regenerating influence of the Spirit. This, therefore, is the *ministration* of the third person of the Trinity. Now he is making his conquests in our world. Now is he moulding the hearts of men; and, under his agency, multitudes which no one can number, are rising from the death in sin to a life of holiness. But—

II. Secondly—With what is *this ministration of the Spirit* here compared?

Turn again to the context, and you will find the answer at once. If the state of the church, since the coming of Christ, is thus called by way of eminence, *the ministration of the Spirit*, then reference must be had to the state of the same church in all the ages and generations which preceded that coming. This follows as a necessary consequence. There may have been some special allusion to the Jewish economy, but the whole period is taken in, from the days of Righteous Abel till the death of the Son of God. Gospel times and gospel blessings are here set over against everything that preceded them, as it respects favor and privilege, whether it be the services of the men who, in the earlier ages of the world, walked before God in the simplicity of patriarchal homage, or of those who, in later days, worshipped with more of external pomp and impressiveness in the temple at Jerusalem. There have been but two great dispensations—the one preceded, the other followed the sacrifice of the cross. The first was the ministration of types and shadows—the last is the *ministration of the Spirit*.

Let us spend a moment in tracing out the comparison. Good men, in the former of these periods, had their minds turned to one prominent object—the advent of the Messiah; and, in the latter, the same class of men have had their minds turned to another prominent object—the gift of the Spirit. From the hour of the first promise of mercy in Eden, to that of the devout Simeon in the temple, believers were all looking forward with earnest expectation to the coming of Christ. This was something which they seem never to have forgotten. It made their hearts glad in the land of their pilgrimage. But is it not a well known fact, that the promise of the Spirit to regenerate and sanctify men, prevades the New Testament almost precisely as that of a Saviour to die for them, does the Old? Ponder well this idea, I beg you. The two dispensations differ, and differ very strikingly, inasmuch as it was the main design of the one to provide an atonement, while it is no less the main design of the other, to apply that atonement. The first was an amazing theatre, erected by the power and goodness of God, for the preparation of blessings; and the latter is a theatre not less amazing, erected by the same power and goodness for the enjoyment of these blessings. One was the seed time—the other is the harvest.

You see what was in the mind of the Apostle. The *ministration of the Spirit* is put, not so much in the way of opposition, as in the way of contrast to the ministration of external symbols and distant anticipations. The case may be thus stated: Before the advent of the Messiah, believers were all expecting his appearance in our world, and were find-

ing sustenance for their faith in what the scriptures predicted of his person and work. Every leaf of their Bible had reference to the seed of the woman. Every sacrifice that bled on the altar prefigured a nobler sacrifice, and the shedding of richer blood. But now that the Saviour is actually come, all these types and prophecies have received their full accomplishment. Nor does anything remain for *us*, living in these latter days and in these ends of the earth, but to fix our hopes upon the copious descent of the Spirit to convert sinners from the error of their ways and fill the world with salvation. This is our delightful anticipation—Here we take our stand.

The things compared by Paul are, therefore, perfectly obvious. They are simply these—a system of types and predictions on the one hand, embracing as their leading idea an atonement to be made, with the rites and expiations prefiguring it; and on the other, a system of promises and ordinances the main idea of which is, an atonement already made, with the accompanying influences and triumphs of the Holy Spirit. This is the precise point. There we see the Patriarch at his alter, and the Jew in his temple. Here we see the Christian in his church, and the convert in a revival. One lives under an economy which, notwithstanding all the hopes it enkindles, imposes a burden that he is not well able to bear, and his courage is kept up only by the prospect of better times to come; the other is animated by witnessing the fulfilment of these anticipations.

Bear all this in mind, and you will easily understand the points of comparison. It has fallen to our lot to live in an age of the church different from that in which Abraham talked with God, and David sung of the Messiah, and Isaiah foretold the rising glories of his kingdom. We enjoy what they only hoped for. Ours is the dispensation of evangelical times and blessings, in distinction from all that preceded it, whether in the days of Noah or Moses. This leads us to inquire—

III. Thirdly—Why this ministration of the Spirit has so distinguished a glory?

On this head the Apostle is very explicit. He brings to view, as we have just seen, the two states of the church, before and after Christ; written, the first of them, with ink—the last with the Spirit of the living God; the first on tables of stone—the last on fleshly tables of the heart. This settles the question. You see where the superiority lies. One of these states included a long season of impressive outward rites; while the other includes a season, perhaps, still longer, of deep internal power. One was a day of forms and ceremonies, the other is a day of life and feeling. The first was characterized as a dispensation, by the prevalence of the letter, which killeth; while the other is equally characterized, as a dispensation, by the prevalence of the Spirit that giveth light.

The language of the Apostle is very significant. If a ministration of righteousness is better than one of condemnation; if a glory which remaineth has more value than a glory which is done away; if a permanent, ever enduring dispensation is to be preferred to one of a temporary character, then we, in these gospel times, are blessed above patriarchs and prophets. Upon us has the true light shone.

This ministration of the Spirit has superseded all that went before it. The ever enduring sacrifice of the cross has come in the stead of the daily lamb bleeding at the alter. The stars though beautiful in themselves, are all hidden by the advance of day, and the dawn of the morning is forgotten amidst the full orbed splendor of the meridian sun. So have the types and shadows of the ancient people of God been displaced and set aside by the superior light of the gospel. These things were never intended to be perpetual. All the symbols, and all the expiations of the law had respect to the present economy of divine mercy, with its simple outward forms, yet rich internal grace, precisely as the shadow of a thing has respect to its substance and reality. What was the giving of the Commandments on Sinai but a preparation for the announcement of the gospel? What was the priesthood of Aaron but an emblem of the eternal priesthood of Christ? What were the sprinklings and ablutions of the temple service but so many figures of the washing of regeneration, and the renewing of the Holy Ghost? The Spirit's ministration has come in the room of all that preceded it, and hence it has a glory that exalteth.

Yet this is not the main idea. Christianity has a glory which belonged neither to the patriarchal nor the temple service, chiefly and preeminently, because the Spirit is now sent down upon the church, with a fullness and an efficiency such as Abraham and Moses never saw. But the interest of this latter period commenced, not so much with the Saviour's coming into the world, as with his going out of it. His death, rather than his birth, introduced the new economy, and became the grand and opening event to those larger and more wonderful displays of divine grace, which have marked the promulgation of the gospel. This fact is not always remembered. So long as the Saviour lived, the lamb bled at the altar, and the priest sent up his incense. But when he died, these ceremonies had no further efficacy, and they began to decay and vanish away.

Not a little depends on a right view of this one point. It was not so much Christ's advent on earth, nor his remaining here three and thirty years to weep, and toil, and pray; as it was his return to the Father, that formed the great culminating event, so to speak, in the history of the church's dispensation. Hence the value he himself set on his departure. Thus we hear him saying, and saying it, observe, as a topic of

consolation to his sorrowful diciples, It is expedient for you that I go away. Why expedient for them? Let his own language furnish the reply—If I go not away, the Comforter will not come to you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you.

You see then the reason of the Apostle's remark. We live under the reign of the Messiah, called, in distinction from all former times and blessings, the ministration of the Spirit; and so called, be it never forgotten, because of the rich effusions of mercy which should attend it, and the large accessions to the church, ordained to set off its triumphs. How fit therefore that the scenes of Calvary should so soon be followed by the scenes of Pentecost! How suitable that the ignominy of such a cross should lead, in a few days, to the glory of such a conquest! The events of the latter occasion were but the appropriate effects, the predicted results, of the former one. It was really nothing else than taking of the things of Christ, and showing them unto men upon a scale large enough, and wonderful enough to excite the admiration of all ages and all worlds, when under the accompanying influences of the Holy Spirit, the Apostles so preached, that three thousand souls were converted in a single day. Well might Jesus bear his sufferings for a reward like this. Well might he be willing to leave his disciples, for the sake of giving the world such a blessing.

All now is plain. We enjoy what Moses hoped for when he prayed, Let thy work appear unto thy servants, and thy glory unto their children; and what Zerubbabel contemplated, when he exclaimed, Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord of Hosts. What they anticipated, we actually possess—What they saw through a glass darkly, we see face to face. Ours is the glory that excelleth, just as the twilight is excelled by the clear shining of mid-day; or as the teeming harvest, ripe for the sickle, excels the buddings and blossoms of Spring.

1st. Then we ought to be sensible of the *peculiar honor* of the present dispensation.

The lines are fallen to us *in happy times*, as well as *in pleasant places*. Many prophets and wise men desired to see such a day as this, but were never permitted to see it, except by dim and distant expectation. The work of the Spirit, connected as it is with the death of Christ on the cross, and his ascension to the right hand of the Father, is the great life-giving fact, upon which depends whatever of simplicity, and clearness, and power, we have over the Patriarch with his bleeding lamb, and the Jew with his smoking censer. O, shall we ever lose sight of this noble distinction! We live in an interesting period of our world's history. It was not permitted to David, or Isaiah, or Daniel to witness such blessings. God has given us both the upper and nether springs. We have the mercies of the New Testament superadded to those of the Old.

Let us pause, and reckon up our advantages—Man's exigency required a sanctifier as well as a sacrifice; an influence to renew his nature, as well as an expiation to cancel his guilt; and, blessed be God, we have them both. The power exerted on the thousands at Pentecost, was just as indispensable as the bloody passion on Calvary; and we enjoy the fruits and benefits of the two together. It is our privilege to live in a day, when we can turn from the wonderful scenes which were enacted in the garden, and on the cross, to the scarcely less wonderful scenes of every valley of vision, upon which the Spirit descends to bring bone to its fellow bone, cover them with sinews and flesh, and raise up an army of regenerated men. What would saints of former days have thought of such things? Never was it told in the ears of the worshippers in Jerusalem, that a nation, like that of the Sandwich Islands, had been rescued, in a few years, from the dominion of filth, and ignorance, and lust, and exalted to a place and a name among the Christianized tribes of the earth. They never saw Zion thus lengthening her cords and strengthening her stakes. Ponder this great fact well, and you will no longer wonder that Paul, with the whole map of the church's history before him, should pass over the giving of the law, and the splendor of the shekinah, and fix his eyes upon the *ministration of the Spirit*, as a period of glory with which no former age could compare.

Here we live. Ours is the privilege of seeing the timber for the house of the Lord—not cut down in the mountains of Lebanon, but put up and fitly framed together. We witness—not the digging out and squaring of the stones in the hills of Judea, but the silent working them into the Temple of Zion. Prophecy has had its fulfilment—shadows have given place to substance. The Spirit of Christ, following the death of Christ, and sealing the benefits of that death upon the hearts of men, characterizes the times in which we live.

2. The existing period of the church demands *spiritual worship, and not pompous external rites.*

We are in danger of forgetting this. Man is a creature of earth and sense, and there is always a tendency in him to rest in forms and symbols of divine things. Thousands of Jews were only Jews outwardly, depending on the letter which killeth, and never feeling the power of the Spirit that giveth life. The pagan adores his god of wood or stone, and fills his temple with costly incense. Catholics address themselves to the imagination, and by associating painting, and sculpture, and music, with the services of religion, seek to establish a dominion over the mind. But, alas! there is one grand defect in all this; it loses sight of the fact that God is a Spirit, and that they who worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth. Ours is not the time for a splendid ritual of religion. We do not live in the days of imposing ceremonies,

Why put shadow for substance again? Why suffer imagination to take the place of faith? As men, the world over, come to attach importance to the shape and position of the altar; the vestments of the clergy; the posture of receiving the sacrament; and the days of the saints, real or pretended; they are sure to decline in the spirituality of God's worship. Tell me not that they have senses, and those senses must be impressed. Say not they have a taste, and this taste must be gratified. This is true; but let me ask, is the influence to be exerted on thinking, immortal beings by the truth itself, or by some worldly-wise expedient, which is permitted to usurp its place. This is the question, and see how the great Teacher settles it. His language is, The hour cometh, when ye shall *neither in this mountain nor yet at Jerusalem*, worship the Father. We live at this very hour. It is not posture, or form, or ritual, that God looks at. Whereever two or three are gathered together in the name of Christ, whether it be like the diciples, in an upper room; or the Scottish Covenanters, in glens and caves; or our Puritan ancestors, under the shade of a spreading oak; there the Saviour is in the midst of them.

What more is needed? Why this tendency to go back to the dark ages? Why this hankering after the leeks and onions of modern Egypt? Sure am I that, so far as life, and power, and impressiveness are concerned, I would rather have been one of the little company on the bare deck of the Speedwell, when the holy Robinson poured out his heart to God, with Elder Brewer, and Miles Standish, and the rest of the heroic band, kneeling at his side, than worship in the proudest cathedral in the world, notwithstanding its lofty arches, and painted windows, and deep-toned organ, and gilded crucifix. The soul cannot be fed with mere pomp and parade.

This settles the question. There is no mysterious efficacy in the order, or sacraments of a church or the church—as some are fond of styling their own little enclosure—that can either ensure, or dispense with, the simple, spiritual homage of the heart. Why think there is? Does the Bible encourage any such idea? Turn over its pages and point me, if you can, to a single verse which exalts into matters of importance, the externals of religion. Men make much of the day when Christ was born, but do these sacred pages fix the time? They love to delineate his countenance, but is there anything here to aid them in doing so? O, my brethren! we live under the ministration of the Spirit, and are not to be occupied with trifles.

3. We are not to look for a dispensation yet to come, of more pomp and impressiveness.

The present reign of the Spirit is so close the period of our world's annals. Nothing of more palpable, imposing form, is to come after it; nothing is to take its place; nothing is to intervene between it and the final judgment. My convictions are firm, and I speak with confidence. We need not be told, at this late day, and after all we have seen of the quiet, noiseless progress of truth and righteousness, that Christ's kingdom is not of this world. If I read the Bible right at all, the only throne which the Redeemer is ever to set up on earth, is a throne in the heart; and this is to be done so completely and universally, under the present ministration of the Spirit,

that all shall know the Lord, from the least to the greatest. He himself is our instructor. We get our lessons in his school.

Other views bring the subject down from its proper eminence. What if the incarnate Son of God should descend from Heaven, and take up his abode once more among men, would this be better for a dying world than the ministration of the Spirit? His bodily presence could only be in one place at a time. If one nation had him with them, another could not. While in this land he could not be in Europe, or on the isles of the sea. But his presence, by the Spirit, in the word and ordinances of his house, can be enjoyed at one and the same moment, wherever men lift up holy hands, without wrath and doubting. Ah! this is what we want; and having this, we may well be content never to see the Son of Man, until he comes to be glorified in his saints, and admired in them that believe. To be looking, really and speedily, for his personal coming, is to forget where we stand in the history of the church, and under what dispensation we live.

To say nothing of the objections to this scheme, which arise from the fact, that it tends to dry up the fountain of Christian benevolence, and to leave the heathen to perish in their sins, there are other serious difficulties connected with it. In my mind, it is nothing less than ending in the flesh, after having begun in the Spirit. It takes me back too far towards the carnal expectations of those Jews, who rejected the Messiah, because his reputed father was a carpenter, and his birth place might be traced to an inn in Bethlehem.

Far be it from me to dictate to the Master; I am perfectly willing he should pursue his own plan for regenerating and sanctifying the nations; but I can never be unmindful of the divinely attested fact, that we have already a gift, which is far more valuable than the personal presence of the Saviour could possibly be. I would not have him take back his own words, when he says, "It is expedient for you that I go away." For the world I would not turn off the eyes of men from the ministration of the Spirit, to any theory more palpable, or visible, or externally impressive. Living, as we do, in the very midst of the Spirit reign—that Spirit that was to come in the Redeemer's stead—that Spirit who is the author of all our precious revivals—that Spirit who takes of the things of Christ, and shows them unto men—what can we wish or wait for more? It is altogether a retrogade movement to be talking now of a revisible throne, and an imposing ritual. These things belong to another economy. They are part of a dispensation which long ago, waxed old and vanished away.

For myself, I am free to say, I anticipate no such scenes. It is enough for me to have the sceptre of the blessed Jesus swayed over my affections. It is enough for me to share in the joys of his extended and applied Gospel. It is enough for me to be favored with the inhabitation of the Holy Spirit. I am willing to wait for a sight of the Son of Man, until he sits on his great white throne, I never expect to hear his voice until he says, Come ye blessed of my Father, I look for no other dominion than that which he exercises at the right hand of power.

Finally---In these days, we are encouraged to expect great things for the church of God.

What followed the Saviour's ascension at first was only a prelude to further displays of mercy. God signalized the enthronement of his Son, in the eyes of the universe, by sending down the Spirit, within fifty days, in a measure never before equalled; and this was not more wonderful in itself, than happy in its promise, as the first fruits of a harvest still yet to be fully and gloriously gathered in. The hearing of Christ's first prayer for the gift of the Comforter, was but an antepast to the continued prevalency of his further intercession.

Tell me not that the prospect is dark, and often seems to be growing still darker. I remember what was done in Jerusalem, before the blood of atonement had hardly dried away from Calvary. I remember what has taken

place in the spiritual birth of nations in our day. Above all, I remember what is written on these blessed pages. Why give way to despondency? Is it not said, all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God? Are we not told that the glory of the Lord shall fill the earth, as the waters cover the sea? We want nothing more. We ask for no higher security.

Those who pray for Zion's increase now, come to God in an acceptable time. Much has been done, as there was before the Saviour's advent, in the way of preparation. The field has been explored; languages have been learnt; the path to the heart of heathen kingdoms has been laid open; partial conquests have been made; the army of the living God is in motion. Who can look abroad and not see cheering indications? In this ministration of the Spirit we place all our confidence. We ask for nothing else than his new creating energy. Only let the Spirit be sent down as Peter saw it, when he charged the murder of the Son of God upon the Jews; and as Paul saw it, when he moved like an angel of mercy from city to city, and from country to country, and the work may be soon accomplished. The babe in your arms may live to see the day, when even China, with her teeming millions, shall welcome the Son of David to his place among her children.

Be not disheartened; the means are at command, and, just so soon as the Spirit is poured out like water upon the thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground, we shall find the great cause of the world's conversion moving on, towards its ultimate triumphs, with an efficacy and a glory that will awaken new songs in heaven. Expansion is the very law of the Saviour's kingdom. Judaism had not in it the elements of enlargement. It could never be the religion of the nations. Everything about it was local and temporary; the world could never attend the feasts at Jerusalem. But Christianity embraces every feature of increase and perpetuity; and, whenever it shall please God to give the Spirit in primitive fullness and power to all our churches, and all our missionaries, we shall be prepared to hear it shouted on earth, and echoed from heaven, The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ!

Look up, then, O believer, and pray for the coming of the Holy Spirit. What, though nearly two thousand years have passed away since the hill of Calvary was wet with atoning blood! What, though darkness still almost covers the earth, and gross darkness the people! What, though three-fourths of this world's population are yet ignorant of the Saviour's name! Never give way to despondency. The time is not far off when Zion shall look forth as the morning, fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners!

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THE DUTIES WHICH THE MEMBERS OF THE CHURCH OWE TO EACH OTHER.

"For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ. For by one Spirit we are all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been made to drink into one spirit. And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it." 1 Cor. xii. 12, 13, 26.

The subject which, from these words, I propose to illustrate, is *the duties which the members of the church owe to each other.*

There are duties which every society owes to itself, as there are duties which every individual owes to himself. Those duties arise from the nature and objects of the association. They are such as pertain to its own strength and respectability; to the conduct and welfare of its members; and to mutual help and counsel in relation to the purpose for which the society has been formed. A society *may be* of such a nature that a large part of its duties will relate only to its internal affairs; or it may be of a kind designed to act extensively on those around it, and yet its whole efficiency will depend on its vigilance over its own members.

Taking the church of Christ at large, there is perhaps nothing more remarkable than the little interest which the members have in each other. In many cases the entire vigilance over the conduct of the members devolves on a few, or perhaps on the pastor alone; in many instances the amount of interest and sympathy extends only to a civil recognition; in others there is not even the interest which secures the most distant acquaintanceship. In numerous instances those who enter a Christian church are left to struggle with difficulties and embarrasments without sympathy, where they feel no more at liberty to call on a member of the church for counsel or aid than they would on any other person; in many cases they struggle along with their spiritual conflicts disheartened and discouraged,

with no reason to suppose that a single member of the church sympathizes with them ; in not a few instances members of the church are known to others to be living in the neglect of duty, or to be conformed apparently entirely to the world, and no one feels under obligation to administer the most gentle rebuke. In many instances also the members go astray, where a kind word from some one of greater age and experience would have saved them from a melancholy fall, and the church from open disgrace.

This is the more remarkable, from the condition in which many are when they become members of the church. Many of them are young and quite inexperienced. Most of them have just entered on the Christian life, and religion is with them like a grain of mustard seed. Many of them are in families where there is no religion, and where they can place no reliance on their kindred to "help them on to God." Many of them are thrown into circles where they are exposed to great temptations, or are engaged in kinds of business where there is every prospect that they will go astray. Add to this that not a few of them are poor, and need assistance; not a few are called to descend from a state of affluence through great reverses, when a sympathizing word would be to them of inestimable value; and not a few are descending into the vale of years who seem to be forgotten in the prayers and sympathies of all those who are in the bloom and vigor of the Christian life.

It has become a very serious question whether it would be possible to restore that artificial thing which we call *the church*, to the model contemplated in the New Testament. The circumstances of the world have so changed,and the church seems to sustain so many relations to the world not contemplated by the organization of the New Testament churches, that it is a matter of grave inquiry whether it would be possible to restore that model ; perhaps with many it would be a question whether it would be even desirable if it could be done. It can be very readily seen, from the slightest acquaintance with the New Testament, that no church approximates the model that was contemplated by the Saviour and the Apostles, that it might be made a serious question with some, whether the progress of society has not suggested some valuable improvement on the original pattern, and whether it be not like some republic or democracy that, with a very imperfect and rude constitution, answered well enough for the half barbarous age in which it was founded, but in which such amendments to the constitution have been made in conformity with the demands of increasing light and civilization, that a removal of those amendments, and a return to the primitive model, would be in fact a relapse into barbarism. What, for example, would any one of our churches become, if everything adventitious and foreign were removed, and it were at once placed on the model of the New Testament ?

Hopeless, however, as it may seem to bring matters back where

they were, it is useful from time to time to recur to these ancient records, and to ask what the church of the New Testament was in its internal organization; in its relation to the world; and in the relation of its members one to another. I propose to state some of those things. With the New Testament before us, and throwing ourselves into apostolic times, let us inquire what the Christian church is.

I. First, it is a community separate from other communities. It has an organization of its own, and that organization is complete It has its peculiar laws for its own internal regulation, and for the regulation of all its members in their intercourse with each other, and with those that are "without." It recognizes no dependence on any other society for the promotion of its objects, and allows no foreign influence to come in and attempt to control it. It asks no patronage from the state; no support of the civil arm or purse; and it sues for no toleration. Its right to be in the world, and to pursue its own independent movements, is original and independent of the state, and is not a *tolerated* right. Though surrounded by other communities, it is independent of them all; and, in a most important sense, *separate* from them all. There *is* a sense which is not merely methaphorical and constructive, in which every member of that church separates himself from the world, and regards himself as no longer pertaining to it. This idea in regard to the church is found in such expressions as the following: "They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world."—John xvii. 16. "If ye were of the world, the world would love his own; but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you."—John xv. 19. "The friendship of the world is enmity with God; whosoever, therefore, will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God."—James iv. 4. "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world; if any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.—1 John ii. 15. "We are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness."—John v. 19. "Ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God."—Col. iii. 3. "How shall we who are dead to sin live any longer therein."—Rom. vi. 2. "Reckon ye yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive unto God."—Rom. vi. 11. So the church is described not only as a community unlike that which constitutes the world, but as in an important sense, separate from it, or having no fellowship with it in its peculiar aims and plans. "What fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? And what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? And what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daugh

ters, saith the Lord Almighty."—2 Cor. vi. 14. "Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues: For her sins have reached unto heaven, and God hath remembered her iniquities."—Rev. xviii. 4. "And be not conformed to this world; but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind."—Rom. xii. 2.

I have selected these passages, out of many more of the same kind that might be referred to, to show that the primitive idea of the church was that of a community distinct from the world, and in an important sense separate from it. In exactly what sense, and to what extent, it is to be separate, is not now the question before us, and there would not be time now to answer the question. The *general* idea is, that it has its own laws and regulations, and that the world has no right to interfere with them; that it is governed by different principles, and has different aims from all other communities; that for its own principles and aims those of the world are never to be substituted; that its spirit is to be unlike that of the world, and that though its members of necessity mingle much with the world, there shoud be such a marked difference that there need be no difficulty in distinguishing one from the other.

II. In the second place, the church, according to the model of the New Testament, is a community characterized by mutual love among its own members. My meaning is, that *love* is to be the distinguishing badge; the thing by which the members of the church are to know each other, and to be known; and the thing by which eminently they are to impress the world with the belief of the reality of their religion. Other societies have pledges and badges of their own. In some it is a secret sign, known only to the initiated, but which will be understood all over the world, and will be a passport to the confidence of a brother of the same craft everywhere. In others it is some peculiarity of speech or dress; some catch-word, rosette, or ribbon. In others it is some mystic sentence of a learned language, the initials of whose words only are exhibited to the world. In others it is in a written constitution, and in subscription to its articles. In others it is a common seal or banner. In others it is a cut of a cap, or the tonsure of the hair. Now it is remarkable that the Saviour and his Apostles prescribed no such external badge of membership or office, either for the officers or members of the society which they originated. This is the more remarkable because, perhaps every society then, as now, could be known by such an outward badge. The Jew would be known everywhere by his broad phylacteries and the borders of his garments; and, it was probably the case, that the Greek who had been introduced into the Eleusinian mysteries had some outward method of expressing that fact to the world everywhere. Nothing would have been easier than for the Saviour to have appointed some such badge for his own followers, for the great facts of his religion would

have furnished striking emblems in abundance. His ministers might have been directed, when they officiated, to encircle their brows with a crown of thorns; or the figure of a cross wrought with imperishable dye in the skin, like the mark which the Roman soldier often adopted, or worn near the heart, made of gold, bestud with diamonds, would have constituted such a badge. Some peculiarity of dress; some stereotyped and inconvenient fashion, soon to be ridiculously antiquated and singular, might have characterized his members; or some gorgeous vestment, often changed, might have made known the ministers of his religion. But you will search the records of his religion in vain for even the slightest *hint* which justifies the adoption of any such badge of distinction. There is not the most distant intimation that either his people or his ministers are to be so distinguished; nor, to meet all that there is in the New Testament, are they required in the slightest degree to deviate from the decencies and proprieties of ordinary social life. No one can fail to admire the beautiful simplicity of the New Testament arrangements in this respect; or perhaps to wonder that the founder of this new society did not imitate all others, and adopt some external badge by which to distinguish it members.

But was there no badge; no mark of distinction? I answer, yes—and one that was as beautiful, appropriate, and distinguishing, as it was original. It was LOVE. See how this is repesented by the Master himself, and his apostles. "A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. *By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.*—John xiii. 34, 35. "We know that we have passed from death unto life because we love the brethren."—1 John iii. 14. "This is his commandment, that we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as he gave us commandment."—1 John iii. 23. "He that loveth not his brother abideth in death."—1 John iii. 14. "If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar; for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?"—1 John iv. 20. "Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour prefering one another."—Romans xii. 10 "As touching brotherly love ye have no need that I write unto you for ye yourselves are taught of God to love another."—1 Thess. iv. 9.

Such are specimens only of the New Testament language on the subject. Who can fail to be struck with the force of the first one quoted, and which was evidently the *germ* out of which all that is elsewhere said in the New Testament has sprung: A new commandment I give unto you that ye love one another: as I have loved you, that ye also love another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another."

I have said that this was as beautiful, appropriate, and distinguishing, as it was original. The Pharisee was known by his external rites of religion, and the peculiarity of his dress? the military man by his cloak, his sword, or by the mark of favour which a grateful country permitted him to wear; the Essene by his squalid habiliments and his contempt of the proprieties of life; the member of a secret society by some mystic sign or mark. In none of these cases had *love for each other* been the distinguishing and peculiar badge by which they were to be known. By no such badges, however, were the members of the Christian society to be known. Nor was it to be by any distinction of wealth, learning, or fame! by any peculiarity of speech, any outrage of the laws of grammar, any customs of dress that would shock the decencies of life, or by any affected prettiness or gorgeousness, in the apparel of its members or ministers. *They were to be distinguished all over the world, and in all ages, by tender and constant attachment for each other.* This was to surmount all distinction of country, of colour, of rank, of office, of sect. Here they were to feel that they were on a level, that they had common wants, had been redeemed by the same blood, were going to the same heaven, and were in every respect *brethren*. There was to be *something* about this love so original, peculiar and universal, that it would serve to distinguish Christians all over the world.

Was it possible that this could be? It would hardly seem so if we were to judge of the church as it is now. Was it ever sufficient to constitute such a distinguishing badge? Yes it was, and the time has been when the attachment of Christians for each other has been such as to impress the world with the reality of their religion, and with the fact that they belonged to the family of the redeemed. They were once persecuted. "See," said the Heathen, "how these Christians love one another, and how ready they are to lay down their lives for each other." Is there still a lingering doubt how *love* could be the badge of discipleship, and could prove that they were of the same family of the redeemed? Can love, then, never be the indication of kindred, of relationship, of our belonging to the same community? Crowds of the young and old press on the bank of a river, and a little child falls in. Amidst the multitudes on the shore, is it difficult to ascertain who is the mother? A youth is led to the stake and chained, and the faggots are piled up, and tar and oil are poured on to make the flame quicker and hotter. There comes an old man, tottering and trembling, says, '*release* that youth, and let me die; I am old and decrepid, and can no more benefit my family or the world. *He* has a sister, and a mother, and a aged sire, who are dependent on him. Let these withered limbs of mine feel the flame, but let him live. Disciples of the same Lord, I might die as well as he, and I pray that I *may* be permitted to lay down my life for my younger

Christian brother.' Would there be any doubt what flame burned still on the warm heart of that trembling old man? And if, as has been, when one was doomed to die for his religion, crowds pressed forward and asked that *they* might die; if, as has been in such scenes, the young, the beautiful, and the accomplished—those nursed in the lap of ease and affluence—pressed forward and asked that *they* might die to save a Christian friend, would there be any doubt that love *might* be a badge of religion? You will say, perhaps, that it is not so now. I answer, for anything that you can tell, if persecutions were to arise, these scenes might be acted over again. But *if* there is not religion enough in the church to do this, I answer further, that in this discourse my aim is not to describe the church as it *is*, but as the New Testament model represents it.

III. In the third place, the church, as represented in the New Testament, is a community characterized by peculiar *sympathy* for those of its own members who suffer. The members of the church are indeed expected and required to have sympathy for all who are afflicted, but the idea is, that it is their duty in a peculiar manner to sympathise with each other, and that what affects one should affect all. It is supposed that Christians will be exposed to the same kind of afflictions as others, and that they will also have many sources of sorrow peculiar to themselves. They are liable to sickness and bereavement. and poverty, like others; they are exposed to persecutions and trials, on account of their religion, and they have internal conflicts and struggles, unknown to other men. They have also peculiar *joys*, as they have peculiar sorrows; and alike in the one and the other, it is supposed they will find cordial sympathy among their brethren. It is supposed that they are one body, and that in whatever part of that body there is joy or sorrow the whole will sympathize with it.

This idea occurs so often in the New Testament, that it cannot be expected that I should adduce all the passages which refer to it. A few must suffice. My text, in the connexion in which it stands, is one of the most prominent of those passages. "As the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body. so also is Christ. And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honored, all the members rejoice with it." The application of this to the human body is obvious. Such is the frame—so delicately constituted is it—such is the formation of the nervous fibres, and the tissues, that pain in one part affects the whole frame: that joy in one part diffuses itself over all. A pain in the heart, the side, or in one of the limbs, does not confine itself there, leaving the rest of the body in a state fitted for its usual employments, but every part sympathises with that which is affected. And so the pleasure which we receive from beauty, as seen by the eye, or from the melody and harmony of numbers as perceived by the ear, is

diffused over the whole frame, and we are filled with enjoyment. The same is supposed to be the effect in the church of Christ. What affects one member affects all. What gives pain to one, gives pain to all. What honors one, honors all; and as an injury done to a nerve in the body, though so small as to be scarcely traceable to an unpracticed eye, may be felt at the remotest extremities, and on the most important functions of life, so it is in the body of Christ. The dishonor done to the obscurest member should be felt by all; the honor done to that member should produce rejoicing. No member of the church should be regarded as so obscure or worthless that his happiness or sorrow should excite no sympathy among his brethren—as you can make no part of the frame so obscure as to be lost on the sympathies of the whole. "Whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honored, all the members rejoice with it."

We have the same idea presented substantially in the following passages. "Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep. Be of the same mind one toward another."—Rom. xii. 15, 16. "Remember them that are in bonds, as bound with them; and them which suffer adversity, as being yourselves also in the body,"—Heb. xiii. 3. "We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves. Let every one of us please his neighbour for his good to edification. For even Christ pleased not himself, but as it is written: "The reproaches of them that reproached thee fell on me."—Rom. xv. 1-3. A church founded on this model would be a community where every member would regard every other one as a brother; where he would rejoice to hear of his welfare, and would sympathize in his griefs; where he would feel pleasure in any honor conferred on any other member, and would be ready to aid him in his sorrows. Without any officious intermeddling with the private concerns of individuals, there would be such an interest felt in the common welfare of the whole, that each one might be certain that he might depend on the sympathy of his brethren at all times, and in all circumstances.

Without attempting further to illustrate this point in general, let me for a moment refer to one aspect of the church to which it is always applicable, and in which the duty referred to may be discharged. I allude to the condition of the *youthful* members of the church, and the claims which they have on the kindness and sympathy of their older brethren. It now happens, and under the influence of Sabbath School instruction, will happen more and more, that a large proportion of those who become members of the church, enter it at quite an early period of life.

It is unnecessary to speak particularly of their condition then. They are inexperienced, alike in the world, and in religion. They have hearts susceptible to all impressions, good and bad. They are surrounded by evil influences from without, and there are

many who would rejoice in any false step which they might make, and any dishonour which they might bring on the cause which they have espoused. They have professedly left the world, and they can no longer look to it for its sympathy. They need instruction ; they need counsel in perplexity ; they need the strengthening influence of the prayers of the church ; they need the watchful eye of those who love Zion ; they need a kind word in their difficulties ; they need an affectionate voice of admonition if they go astray. Perhaps they need aid in their business ; and, not only that they may prosper in that business, but that they may honour religion in it, they need the counsel of those who have experience. What their circumstances require is, not only that they may feel free to seek the spiritual advice of their pastor, but that they may seek counsel on all subjects from their Christian brethren. No man knows what service he may be rendering to the cause of religion, by a word of affectionate encouragement and counsel to a young member of the church. He who takes a Christian youth by the hand and saves him from temptation, or encourages him to open his heart freely to him, or helps him in his efforts to get into some useful employment, or assists him in obtaining an education for the ministry, may be doing the most important service to religion which he can ever render, for he does that which shall be telling on the welfare of Zion long after he shall have gone to his rest.

IV. In the fourth place, the church, according to the model in the New Testament, is a community in which its members accommodate themselves and their conduct, so far as can be done with a good conscience, to the views and scruples of their brethren. It is a community in which it is the duty of its members not to give needless offence to their brethren : not to do that, unless conscience requires it, which others regard as wrong, and to be ready to sacrifice what they may regard as harmless indulgence, if it should be the occasion of leading others into sin. This important principle it is my business now to show was laid down by those who had authority to give laws to the church, and was cheerfully practised by themselves. Having shown this, the question will arise, in what circumstances, the application of the principle is demanded now.

We are naturally reminded of the conduct of the Saviour, as stated in a passage already referred to. "For even Christ pleased not himself."—Rom. xv. 3 ; comp. John vi. 38. It was not his object to gratify himself ; nor did he ever do anything which would lead the most ignorant of his followers into sin. He indulged in nothing that could give offence to any who were most anxious to lead lives of deadness to the world, and evinced throughout a readiness to deny himself of any personal gratification which could be indulged in only at the hazard of the souls of men. And so it is said of all Christians : "None of us liveth to himself ; and no man dieth to himself."—Rom. xiv. 7.

But was it the idea that, from respect to the opinions and feelings of others, it was proper to give up what would otherwise be regarded as innocent and harmless? Was it ever the idea that the conduct of a member of the church was to be influenced by the views of his brethren, so as to lead him to sacrifice what he would himself regard as harmless and proper? And ought a reference to the feelings, the views, and the weaknesses of our brethren, be allowed to regulate our own conduct in anything that is not a matter of conscience? We have a very striking case, in answer to this question in the conduct of the Apostle Paul. The question arose in the primitive church, whether it was lawful for a Christian to eat the flesh offered in sacrifice to idols. It was urged, on the one hand, that if this were done it would seem to lend a sanction to idolatry, and would lead the feebler members of the church, who were not accustomed to nice discrimination in reasoning, into sin. On the other hand, it was alleged that the eating of flesh that was exposed for sale was not unlawful, and that the purpose for which it was offered could not affect the question whether it was lawful to partake of it. Paul was clearly (1 Cor. viii.) of the latter opinion, and yet the former consideration decided him in regard to his own practice. The eating of meat could not be with him a matter of conscience, and if his doing it were the occasion of leading one into sin, he was willing to forego the indulgence. Hence he so firmly says: "If meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend." —1 Cor. viii. 13.

A question of similar character, and perhaps in the same connexion, came up in regard to the use of wine, and the Apostle stated a similar principle, that, whatever might be his own convictions as to the absolute lawfulness of the practice, it could not be right if it were the occasion of leading others to sin. "It is good neither to eat flesh, nor to drink wine, nor anything whereby thy brother stumbleth, or is offended, or is made weak."—Rom. xiv. 21. His own general rule in all such matters, he has elsewhere stated: "I made myself servant unto all that I might gain the more. And unto the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews; to them that are under the law as under the law, that I might gain those under the law; to them that are without law, as without law, that I might gain them that are without law. To the weak I became as weak, that I might gain the weak; I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some. And this I do for the gospel's sake, that I might be partaker thereof with you."—1 Cor. ix. 19—22.

The general principle, as an illustration of what the Christian church is to be, is here plain. It is this: "There are some things which are right or wrong in themselves. They depend on the positive enactments of God, and on the eternal distinctions of things,

and cannot be compromised, modified, or disregarded. There are other things, however, which may be regarded as matters of personal comfort, convenience, or gratification. They are clearly right in themselves, but they may be so connected, or there may be such associations in regard to them, or others may entertain such views of them, that indulgence in them by us will be an injury to others. It may shock or pain them as if we were doing wrong; or, acting on our example, they may be led farther than we would go, and fall into sin; or they may be led by our example to do that which they *now* regard as sin, and which would be sin to them. In such a case, the course which *we* are to pursue becomes clear, and it is good neither to eat flesh, nor to drink wine, nor anything where by a brother is offended, or is made weak."

This was the principle on which the Christian church was evidently founded, and on which the Apostle Paul acted. It may be observed here that it is a principle for which there will always be occasion in the church. The particular questions in connexion with which it was stated may not occur, but questions precisely similar are occurring in every age, and under the numerous phases in which society appears. There are certain things which are absolutely right, and always right, and from the obligation to do which no modification of society or custom can absolve us; and there are certain things which are absolutely wrong and always wrong, and which no modification of society can make right. And there are certain things, always quite numerous, where the consciences of some are entirely clear as to their lawfulness, and of others much in doubt, or when the tendency of indulgence would be to lead others into sin. In such cases, what is Christian duty! What would Paul do?

We will take two cases, one of which Paul has himself referred to; the other not.

The one is the use of wine. You regard it as lawful. You think the Scriptures do not condemn its use, and refer to the example of the Saviour in justification of its use. But many of your Christian brethren have strong doubts on the subject; no matter whether well founded or not. What is more to the purpose, perhaps, is, that many of them might not be as *safe* in the use of it as you would be. They are younger; they are liable to be invited to places where you would not be; and there is a moral certainty that, sustained by your example, they will be led to excessive indulgence, and may bring reproach on the religion which you and they profess to love. *In such cases, what would Paul do?* Would it be found on his own table; would his conduct be such that it *could be construed* in favor of that which had led others astray? *We know what his conduct would be.* "It is good not to drink wine, or anything whereby a brother stumbles, or is offended, or is made weak."

The other case you have probably anticipated. It is that of dancing. You think it not wrong, though the arguments on which a Christian justifies it have not yet been submitted to the public. You would refer in this instance to neither the example of the Saviour or his Apostles, nor to any recorded experience of theirs, as to its lawfulness for a Christian. But there are, we will suppose, views which make you think that it is not inconsistent with the proper spirit of a Christian, and the precepts of the New Testament. Meantime there *are* very different views among your brethren. They have no doubt about it, and they do not hesitate to express their conviction that it is inconsistent with the general spirit of the New Testament, and with the proper example of a Christian. Some of these may be among the "weaker" members of the church, but not all. There are found the great mass of the most devoted and useful ministers of the gospel in all denominations, and many, very many, of the most spiritual and exemplary members of the churches. I may make an appeal to you yourself on this subject just here, which I mean shall convey no invidious idea, and excite no invidious comparison. It is, whether, as far as your own observation has extended, you do not yourselves believe that the most consistent and devoted members of the church—they who have the most *enjoyment* in religion—regard it as improper for Christians. If you find a very devoted and eminent Christian, do you, or do you not expect to find him in the ball-room, and do you expect that he will regard this species of amusement as that which is proper for a Christian? But still more to the purpose. This practice which *you* regard as proper, and in which, for supposition *only*, we will regard as safe for you, will not be as safe for all. There are the young, the inexperienced, the "weak," in the church. There are those of little education, of ill-balanced minds, of the imperfectly subdued love of the world. There are those who are surrounded with more temptations than you are, and there is a moral certainty that sustained by your example, they will be led into sin. In such circumstances, what would Paul do? Am I wrong in inferring, from the principles which he has laid down, that he would not enter a ball-room "while the world stands?" If I am wrong, will you tell me exactly where there is a link wanting in the chain of reasoning by which I am conducted to this conclusion?

V. In the fifth place, the church is a community in which it is contemplated that there shall be mutual admonition among the members, if they go astray. I will not now tax your patience by illustrating this point at length, though it is a point which I had designed to make somewhat prominent. Yet it was an elementary idea in the early conception of the Christian church. Look at the fundamental principle laid down by the Saviour: "If thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between him and thee alone; if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother."

—Matt. xviii. 15. "*Thy brother;*" that is, clearly, a fellow-member of the church. You are not to blazon it abroad; you are not to allow the *suspicion* that he has done you wrong to lie and rankle and fester in your own mind; you are not to allow it to make you cold, and distant, and evasive and repulsive when you meet him, without his knowing the cause; you are not to whisper your suspicions to this one and that one, with the hope that *they* will hint to your 'brother' that he has offended you; you are not to send him an annonymous letter, or a message by any one; you are to '*go*' to him, and see him by himself, and give him an opportunity of explanation or confession. If he 'hears' you, you have gained him; and if he repents, you are to forgive him, 'even till seventy times,' and to no one else are you to say any thing about it. Matt. xviii. 22. "If thy brother trespass against thee," said the Saviour again, "rebuke him, and if he repent forgive him." Luke xvii. 3. And so said the old Mosaic statute: "Thou shalt in any wise rebuke thy neighbour, and not suffer sin upon him." Lev. xix. 17.

But I may not dwell on this duty, though its illustration might be easily made to occupy the time of a whole discourse. I will just say that the church is not now in this respect what it was contemplated it should be. Almost the whole of the painful duty—for it *is* a painful duty—of rebuking an erring brother, is supposed to devolve on the pastor; and there are many who would not *receive* a rebuke from any other, even if they would from him. Nothing is more common than for members of the church to see other members going astray, or leading what they regard as inconsistent lives, without feeling the slightest obligation on themselves to rebuke them or attempt to reclaim them. It would be said by these that the customs of society, and the different ranks and circles of life, and the fact that the offenders are rich, and that they are themselves poor, make it impossible and improper for *them* to attempt to administer a word of kind admonition. And this illustrates just the point before me, that the church is not now what it was in the time of the Saviour, and what it was contemplated it should be. It is an artificial thing, in which a thousand rules and institutions have come in to displace those of the New Testament, and to make it, at large, almost essentially unlike the 'platform' of a church there laid down.

Yet I cannot forbear, in conclusion, to advert in one word, to the beautiful conception—the *beau ideal* of the church as organized in the New Testament. It is a society essentially unlike that of the world; organized on pure and holy principles; and intended to be governed by peculiar laws. It contemplates that its members shall perform with honesty, fidelity, and purity, all the relative duties which they owe to their kindred, their neighbours, their country; but on principles not of policy, expediency, or worldly morality, but

found in its own code of laws. It is a community whose badge and characteristic is love for its own members—a peculiar love founded on their common redemption and hope of heaven, and their attachment to a common Saviour, and which knows no distinction of color, caste, age or country—a love so strong and pure that it is to be seen by the world to be a new element in human conduct; the development of a new law. It is a community where there is sympathy, deep and sincere, for its suffering members, and where, as in the human body, joy or sorrow in one part thrills along the whole frame.—It is a community requiring of us mutual kindness concession, and forbearance; a careful solicitude not to offend, and not to lead others into sin; a willingness to forego our own comforts and indulgencies if we may help others who are feeble and weak on to heaven. It is a community all of whose members are liable to go astray, but in which each member feels an interest in the welfare of every other, and who, whenever he wanders, would by prayer and supplication and appropriate personal effort, seek to lead him back to the paths of pure religion. Such were some of the features of the New Testament church; had this always been its character, long since its glory would have enlightened all lands, and the earth would have been filled with the knowledge of salvation.

SERMON CCCXCI.

BY REV. JONATHAN BRACE,

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THE NATURE AND EMPLOYMENT OF HOLY ANGELS.

"Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation."—Hebrews i. 14.

FROM the earliest ages, mankind seem to have had some conceptions of an order of beings superior to themselves. Nor, when we contemplate our situation, is this surprising. We see orders of beings *below* us in rank—beasts, fishes, reptiles, and insects; and it is reasonable to conclude, that there are orders of beings likewise *above* us, in the scale of dignity and intelligence. We know not why there should be any gaps or chasms in the creation of God; why that chain should be broken, of which man seems the middle link, and which stretches from the incomprehensible Jehovah down to the half-formed animalculæ. We, indeed, know nothing *certain*, respecting this, but by revelation; yet, as the restless mind of man has been ever conjecturing, it is not strange, that when there was so

much ground for conjecture and opinion as in the present instance, the Greeks should have had their demons, (knowing ones)—the Romans, their genii—or, that heathen authors have written so much respecting satyrs, fauns, and nymphs of every kind. What, however, reason makes only probable, the Bible places beyond dispute *That* assures us, that there are both good and evil—holy and fallen angels; informs us also of their nature and occupation; and tells us further, that we have with both these orders a direct concern.

I propose, at the present time, to speak only of the *former* of these classes, the *Holy* Angels, of whom we have an interesting though brief account in the text. "Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?" By this we may understand that angels are *spirits*, and that they are *active* spirits.

Let us, then, *contemplate the character of these celestial inhabitants and their employments; which will prepare the way for some practical reflections.*

1. I remark, that they are *immaterial beings;* not encumbered like curselves with flesh and blood, though doubtless, like ourselves, endued with reason, affections, and free agency. If they have *bodies*, these bodies are formed—not of such matter as that with which we are acquainted, but of what is far more subtle and etherealized than such matter—matter imperceptible by our senses, as we are now constituted.

2. *Their intellects are capacious and richly furnished.*

Their minds were *originally* formed with exalted faculties, and these faculties have since been constantly expanding, and constantly engaged in amassing knowledge. More than six thousand years have these distinguished intelligences, been devoting themslelves, with intenseness and fervor, to the study of truth. Had Adam lived until the present time, and with only the ordinary capacities of humanity, have employed himself in investigating various subjects, what a high degree of knowledge would be now possess! How great, then, how inconceivably great, that amount of information which those have obtained, who, with commanding faculties at first, have been since ardently searching into the works of Jehovah— his works of creation, of providence, and of grace!

3. *Their strength is wonderful.*

A *good* angel must be as strong as an angel *ruined;* but it was a *fallen* angel which raised a whirlwind, "smote the four corners of Job's house," and immediately destroyed his children. It was an angel who "smote in one hour all the first born of the land of Egypt, both of man and beast;" and it was "the four angels," we are told in the book of Revelation, who were commissioned "to hold the four winds of heaven." The twentieth chapter of this book, presents us likewise with the spectacle of "an angel coming

down from heaven, with the key of the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand, and laying hold of the dragon which is Satan, chaining him, casting him into the bottomless pit, shutting him up and setting a seal upon him." Almost boundless, then, is the power of these first-born children of God! They "*excel* in strength."

4. *But their activity is as astonishing as their strength.*

A striking proof of this we are furnished with in the case of Daniel. He commenced prayer, and before he had concluded, "the angel Gabriel being ordered to fly swiftly, touched him," and announced an answer to his request. Though light flies with great rapidity—264,000 miles in a second, yet it takes three years for its rays to reach us from some of the fixed stars; but here Gabriel comes from the immediate presence of the Most High to our world, probably a distance far more remote, in a few moments. Such unparalleled velocity, words can neither express nor imagination conceive. They literally, like their Master, "*walk* on the wings of the wind."

5. In addition to these attributes, this dignified order of beings are, in their nature, *pre-eminently lovely*. All the gentler and sublimer virtues, tarnished with no spot and debased with no alloy, meet in and adorn their character. They are invested with every external grace, and in their bosoms one intense flame of love to their Creator and his creatures, burns clearly and perpetually. God is holy, and they are his *holy angels*—objects of his complacency, made in his image, and reflecting his perfections.

Such, at a glance, is the *nature* of these noble spirits. As to the *number* of them, it is exceeding great. Our Lord speaks of "more than twelve legions," who, had requested it, would instantly have come to his aid. Matt. xxvi. 53. "Thinkest thou, that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels?" A Roman legion amounts to more than six thousand men; more than seventy-two thousand would have come, therefore, to the Saviour's help, had he required it, Daniel saw, in his vision, "thousands of thousands ministering to the Ancient of days, and ten thousand times ten thousand standing before him;" and the apostle, in the epistle to the Hebrews, calls them, "an innumerable company." Their numbers exceed computation.

II. Let us now, secondly, inquire, *respecting their employments*. They *have* employments. God has so formed his rational creatures, that to be happy, their faculties must be engaged in the pursuit of some interesting end. Time hangs heavy on the hands of those who have nothing to do. They are restless and uneasy; and if angels had no occupation, they, too, could not be blessed.

"An *angel's* wing would droop, if long at rest."

But they are *not* at rest, they are engaged.

1. *They celebrate Jehovah's praises.*

When the foundations of our earth was laid, these "morning stars sang together, and all these sons of God shouted for joy." As they beheld this terraqueous globe, emerge harmonious and beautiful from chaos, at the fiat of the Almighty; saw "light invest it—the firmament arch above it—the waters roll backward into their bed—the dry land heave, and the mountains lift their heads towards heaven"—charmed at the wisdom and power displayed, they sang praises to Him, who spake, and this mighty work was done. When the law was announced from the trembling top of Sinai, amidst lightnings, thunders and tempest, the chariots of God even thousands of angels, are mentioned as encompassing the mount, exalting the majestic law-giver by their presence, and adding grandeur and solemnity to the scene. At the birth of the Messiah, angels hymned his natal song, bringing glory to God and glad tidings to man, into delightful union. And when this Messiah, having completed his arduous, yet blessed work, returned to his Father who sent him, these same spirits hailed his advent with acclamation, calling the gates to lift up their everlasting heads, and the doors to lift up theirs also, that their King might come in. And now in the upper temple, they "rest not day nor night, crying holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God Almighty; and saying blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever!"

2. They, also, as we have seen, with unmingled and intense love of truth, *study the character and the works of God.* The divine character is a subject full of interest for them—a subject which they can never exhaust; and as more and more of the infinite Creator is unfolded to their admiring gaze, fresh emotions of delight are awakened. Since, too, "the *works* of the Lord are great, sought out of all them that have pleasure therein," and *they* have much pleasure in these works; these works, likewise, they explore. But particularly do the dispensations of the Most High towards *his church*, engage their minds, and open delightful fields of investigation. "Into these things they desire" especially "to look," for in these they find "the *manifold wisdom* of God." "By the church," her incarnate, suffering, dying, risen, Saviour, "is made known unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places," more of the incomprehensible Jehovah, than can be found any where else,—glory of his most winning and kindling, the *riches* of his love and grace.

3. *They are prompt to execute the judgments of God upon the guilty.* Is the army of Sennacherib obnoxious to Him whom they serve? An angel flies on his mission of terror, and slays a hundred, fourscore, and five thousand men of them. Does David, by numbering the people, contrary to the Divine command, justly expose his nation to the Divine vengeance? An angel is despatched, who

destroys in three days, three-score and ten thousand persons out of Judah and Israel." And if any vials of Jehovah's wrath are to be poured out on any particular portions of our corrupt earth, an *angel* breaks the seal, and the curse comes.

4. "But one of their *chief* employments, is described in the text;—*they minister unto the heirs of salvation*:—Those whom God designs to save,—whom Christ has redeemed,—whom the Holy Ghost has regenerated, and is now sanctifying: and who, having bowed to the Lord as their rightful sovereign,—have renounced the world, devoted themselves to his service, and live on Him for protection and happiness:—in other words, to *real christians*,—to such it is the duty, as it is the privilege, of these noble beings, to minister. It is almost incredible that they *do this*. It would be *quite* incredible, had not inspiration declared the welcome fact, and recorded many such instances of their affectionate condescension:—or rather, it would be quite incredible, had not God parted with the Son of his bosom, to *die* for us;—but having done *this*, no examples of his regard, or of other's regards, far loftier in every respect than ourselves, should occasion distrust or suprise. "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also, freely give us all things." We are mean creatures indeed,—frail, sinful, mortal, but if we are not too mean for the Lord of all, to *die* for, we are of sufficient consequence for even angels to *minister unto*. And we are assured they do this: "They minister unto the heirs of salvation." An heir of salvation is one adopted into the family of God: and as the older members of a family, smile upon the new-born infant, cherish it as one of themselves, because sustaining a like relation with them to the same parents; so angels foster the weak, tender, believer. Though his superiors in intelligence, piety, and power, he has the same Divine Father, and is to enjoy, eternally enjoy with them, the same Heaven. They feel, therefore, a deep interest in Christians,—*minister* unto them.

But how have they discharged this office? And here: "Not to be wise above what is written," we must confine ourselves to the inspired word. We must look for instances of these, their acts of kindness, in the Bible. How, then, *have* angels ministered to saints in *past ages?*

1. They have done this: *By keeping them out of evil.* When Elijah had fled from the fury of Jezebel, and hisheartened, lay under a juniper tree in the wilderness, where, but for food, he would have perished: "an angel touched him, and said unto him, Arise and eat; and he looked, and behold, there was a cake baken upon the coals, and a cruise of water at his head; and he did eat and drink, and laid him down again." When he on whom Elijah's mantle had fallen, Elisha, was hunted down by the agents of the King of Syria, for destruction; more were *for* the man of God, than were

against him. "Behold the mountain on which he stood, was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha." And in the 91st Psalm, it is said, "to him who dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High,"—the genuine saint.—"He shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways; they shall bear thee up in their hands, lest thou dash thy foot against a stone." This, then, is *one* mode in which these spirits ministered to the first Christians; they preserved them from serious harm.

2. They delivered them from danger, *when fallen into it.* "The angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear him, and *delivereth them.*" Not only comes to them for a moment, and then departs, but *encampeth* about them,—pitches his tent around them and locates permanently for their relief. The word angel, here, is a noun of multitude, and by the passage is to be understood, that these spirits watch the people of God with intentness, for the purpose of affording them succor in seasons of peril and distress. Moses, informing the King of Eden respecting the Israelites,—the covenant people of God, said, "Our fathers went down into Egypt and the Egyptians vexed us and our fathers; and when we cried unto the Lord, he heard our voice, and *sent an angel,* and brought us forth out of Egypt." Before the burning tempest fell upon Sodom, angels laid hold upon Lot, and brought him beyond the devoted city. Daniel, surrounded with lions, had fallen a prey to their ferocity; but "the Lord *sent his angel,* and shut the lion's mouth." Peter was in prison, between two soldiers, bound with two chains, and the morrow's sun would have looked upon his corpse; but suddenly a light shone in upon him, and the darkness of his prison-house departed, and his chains fell off, and the doors of his dungeon and outer gate opened of their own accord, and Peter was free. And what does he say of it; "Now I know of a surety, that the Lord *hath sent his angel,* and hath delivered me out of the hand of Herod, and from all the expectation of the people of the Jews."

3. *Angels guided, and directed Christians what to do.* As Gideon was thrashing wheat by the wine-press, to hide it from the Midianites, an angel appeared under an oak which was in Ophrah, and directed him first, to cut down the altar of Baal and the grove that was by it, and then with a few selected warriors, he marched to the camp of Midian, with his pitchers and his lamps. Moses went unto Pharaoh, and demanded the children of Israel for the worship of their God, because "the angel of the Lord had appeared unto him in a flame of fire, out of the midst of a bush." It was an angel, who told Joseph to take the young child and his mother and go into Egypt; and it was an angel, who appeared to Mary Magdalene, and the other Mary, after the resurrection of Christ, pointed them to the place where the Lord lay, and directed them to go quickly and tell his disciples, that he was risen from the dead.

4. *Angels acquainted primitive Saints with things to come.* Thus was Zacharias informed respecting the birth of his son John the Baptist, "An *angel*, when it fell to his lot to burn incense in the temple of the Lord, appeared, standing on the right side of the altar of incense." During Paul's voyage to Rome, an angel in the night season, assured him that none of the ship's crew would be lost, and that he himself must be brought before Cæsar. And how did the great Head of the Church communicate the apocalypse to the Apostle John, and through him to all generations of Christians till the end of time? "He sent, and signified it by his angel."

In these several ways, did angels minister to Saints in *past ages? But do they minister to them* NOW? We know of no reasons why they should *not;* we know of many reasons whey they *should;* and inspiration expressly declares, that they do *now* perform this office. Some of the passages we have quoted, manifestly *imply* this, and our text plainly *teaches* it. "Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?" *Not, were* they all ministering spirits *once,* though not now, but *are* they not, at the present time, under the gospel dispensation, and is not this a standing employment of angels, till the end of the world? Evidently, this is the meaning: and it is as true now, as when Jacob, a forlorn wanderer from his father's house, overtaken by nightfall in the open field, encamped there; the stones of the place for his pillow, and beheld a ladder resting upon the earth, and the top of it reaching Heaven; it is true now as then, that angels of God descend and ascend, from heaven to earth, and from earth to heaven continually, in the performance of this—to them most delightful duty.

But *what is the probable nature of their ministrations now?* Not, we may believe, the same *in every respect,* as formerly, and since this ministry, being the ministry of invisible agents, "cometh not with observation," it may be difficult to say *precisely* in what it consists. We do know *something* definite. We know that as men were ruined by the instigation of a *fallen* angel there is a peculiar propriety in their being helped towards heaven. by angels who have *not* fallen. And since apostate spirits in a variety of ways, endeavour to injure the bodies as well as the souls of men, holy angels may in many ways, do good to these bodies and these souls. The kind services of holy angels, are undoubtedly opposed to the malignant efforts of evil spirits, and knowing what *Satan* does, we may safely infer what *they* do. They may enlighten us in our enquiries after truth, and establish in the truth. They may suggest pious thoughts, quicken sluggish affections, and gently incline our wills towards moral excellencies. They can console and animate us, as they did the desponding Elijah, and sustain us, as they sustained the fainting soul of the Apostle Paul. They, can break the toils of the net which Satan spreads, or warn us of

the snares thus laid for our feet. Privy to the dark designs of the tempter, they can blast his schemes ere yet they are executed

To our bodies also, they may minister in a variety of ways which we do not understand. When we look back, my brethren, upon our pilgrimage, how many deliverances from danger have we experienced? from how many perilous positions have we been rescued? How is this? Shall we ascribe it to *chance*,—a word which has no place in the Christian's vocabulary,— or shall this preservation be ascribed to our wisdom or strength? Have we not rather escaped, because Jehovah "gave his angel's charge concerning us and in their hands they have borne us up?" In our childhood and in our riper years, at home and abroad, in all the vicissitudes of life; many have been "the stones against" which we might have "dashed our feet," but for the ministry of tutelary angels.

> "Millions of spiritual creatures walk the earth unseen,
> Both when we wake and when we sleep;"

is the language put by Milton into the mouth of Adam; and who can tell, that were our "eyes not *holden*," they would be seen around the believer's path, watching, lest the serpent, who, beguiled by subtilty, Eve, should beguile Christians also, and plunge them to ruin?

> "What ills their heavenly care prevents,
> No earthly tongue can tell."

If the Lord does,—as it is universally admitted that he does —deliver us by *men*, from evil which would be brought upon us by men, and material causes: may He not deliver us also by *invisible* protectors, from the subtilty and violence of *invisible* enemies? Plainly are we taught, that when the soul of the Christian leaves his body, it is "conveyed by angels to Abraham's bosom;"—do angels have nothing to do with the soul and body *until* that time? We cannot believe it. In ways, in many ways, they "minister unto the heirs of salvation," and whether we can specify these particular ways or not, affects not the interesting fact. They *do* minister unto the *good*, in contradistinction from the *bad*, *now*, and at the last day, will sever the one from the other—"the wicked from among the just"—and make that separation eternal!

The way is now opened for some practical reflections.

1 *How affectionate are the regards Jehovah manifests for his people.* From the time that promise, "the seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head," went forth from the lips of our Lord, how careful has he been to see its fulfilment! How careful has he been of his chosen ones? How watchful of their immortal interests? He who touches them, touches the apple of his eye; and knowing that they are but dust, and that in this dark and distant world they are encompassed with unfavourable influences,

he gives them in charge to celestial beings. The love of God ceased not when his Son left his bosom ; nor yet when that Son having endured the agonies of Gethsemane and of Calvary rose from the dead to a seat at his right hand : no, but this love is seen still, in imparting guidance, consolation, and strength, by angelic ministry, by sending help from heaven to interpose against the skill and wiles of malignant spirits, and aid in our recovery and salvation.

2. *The ministry of angels demand our gratitude.* "The Lord forgive me." says the devout Bishop Hall, "for that among my other offences, I have suffered myself so much to forget, not only *His* divine presence, but also the presence of his *holy angels.* It is I confess, my great sin, that I have filled up my eyes with other objects, and been slack in returning praises to my God for the continued assistance of these blessed and beneficent spirits, who have ever graciously attended me without intermission, from my birth to the present moment ; neither ever shall, I hope, absent themselves from my tutelage and protection, till they shall have presented my poor soul to her final glory." May *we* not, my brethren, make this same confession, and utter this prayer ? Who, of us, have been sufficiently mindful of these invisible guides, instructors and comforters ? If this discourse be *truth*, we have a duty yet to perform in this respect—to thank God for the attendance upon us of this celestial retinue.

3. *How exalted is the dignity of believers ?* "*Angels* minister unto them." The wicked may revile them, and point at them the finger of scorn; but angels, unspotted, noble, glorious angels, love them, appreciate them, and cheerfully do them service. The name *Saint* in *this* world, where right and wrong are confounded, and vice bears rule, is often a term of reproach. O what a different meaning does that word convey to the mind of him "who seeth not as man seeth,but who looketh upon the heart," and to the mind of intelligent heaven ! There are those now, who are ashamed to be considered Christians. Look at it. Ashamed to be one of those to whom angels are not ashamed to minister ! How ridiculous in the eyes of angels, and of God, do such appear? or rather, if angels could blush at what others *ought* to blush, how would they blush at such a spectacle ? No. "Let evening blush to own her stars," let Satan, apostate, abandoned Satan, blush, at the remembrance of his once lofty perfections and dignified estate; but let not man blush at the name of *Christian.* I wonder not that the wicked are represented at the last day, as "calling upon the rocks and mountains to fall upon them." I wonder not, that having been ashamed of Christians, and the Christian name, they should then be ashamed of *themselves*, and "awake to shame, and everlasting contempt." I wonder not at that expression, "confusion of face." I should think that there *would* be confusion of face

whenever the ungodly looked at their Maker, their conduct or their company.

4. *What a noble model for imitation, is this glorious order of beings?* Had our race always acted like *them*, how different should we be from what we now are. Man, originally, was "made only a little lower than the angels," but instead of approximating towards them, and rising in the scale of creation, he departs from them, and descends towards the brute. It becomes him to look above, not beneath—it *becomes* him to be like *angels*. How eager and indefatigable are the pure spirits in the pursuit of sacred knowledge! How lively and intense their gratitude! How ardent their love! How constant and cheerful their obedience! Above all, what greatness and condescension, benignity and power, unite and sweetly harmonize in their characters? Though exalted far above us, and conscious of such dignity and exaltation, they willingly become the companions, and execute the humblest offices for the fallen children of Adam. To protect and cherish those who are poor, and guilty, and defenceless, and wretched, is in a sense, their professional, chosen employment. In *their* bosoms. pride finds no place. Weak, ignorant, sinful man, is proud, and devils are proud; but angels, how meek, and lowly, and lovely, are they! Let us *imitate* them, my brethren. Be quick to learn, prompt to do, and habitually condescending to those of humble estate. See in every neighbor, a friend, in every Christian, a brother.

5. *How glorious a view does our subject present, of the future blessedness of the righteous!* We have seen what holy angels are, and how they are employed, and inspiration says, that the children of God shall be "*equal to the angels.*" Can it be? Do I look upon those, who shall one day have the same purity, dignity, and felicity, which angels now have? It is even so. Blessed thought. If there is a person here, in the sanctuary of God, to whom, as an heir of salvation, angels now minister, that one shall be as perfect as angels now are, when he "shines forth as the sun in the Kingdom of their Father." And there the Christian will associate with those angels who ministered to him here. There is something inexpressibly delightful in this. Kind offices are the firmest bond of friendship; and it may be Jehovah's wise economy to endear unto us the inhabitants of heaven, by permitting them in this world to do us good. If one confers upon you favors, how does your heart go out towards him! If, when your house was on fire, and the blazing timbers falling around you, a stranger should rush through the smoke and flames, and bear you to a place of safety in his arms, how strong would be your affection for that stranger; and if you met with him for the first time after his deed of love, in a distant country, how would you grasp his hand, and with swimming eyes acknowledge your obligations! Lafayette opened his

coffers, and unsheathed his sword in defence of American liberty; and when he visited us again, triumphal arches were reared in memory of his kindness, and the grateful shouts of thousands rung upon his ears. And when beyond Jordan, you meet with those who cheered you in this vale of tears, and held you up amidst the perils of your pilgrimage, will you not greet them? Has not Elijah, think you, had, ere this, a joyful interview with that angel, who fed him under the juniper tree, that he might not die? O brethren, if we are Christians indeed, we know not the glories which await us.

"Oh angels, I want to be there,
Where sorrow and sin bid adieu,
Your joy and your friendship to share,
To wonder and worship with you."

Finally. *Let the impenitent know, that it is a fearful thing to live in a world like this.* Great things are going on. This earth is a theatre, on which important business is transacting. Mighty, eternal concerns, are depending here. The God of creation has been upon this earth, in the habiliments of a man, and died, that man might live. The Holy Spirit is abroad, making men willing to be saved. Good angels are abroad, taking care of the heirs of salvation, and guiding them to their home to the skies. And devils are abroad, to darken foolish hearts, obstruct the work of the gracious spirit, and lure souls to death. It is a fearful thing to be in such a place as this. It may seem a trifling thing to live, and in the hurry and bustle of life, you may forget where you are. But know, my friends, *it is a fearful thing to live*; know that this is a state of probation; know that devils would destroy you, and angels rejoice over your repentanee; and know also, that "the things of your peace will soon be hidden from your eyes."

O that you would feel these things, that the angels now around us, might bear the glad tidings on high. Gladly would they do it. Gladly would those who announced the Saviour's birth to the Shepherds, ministered to him in the wilderness, sustained him in the garden, and rolled away the stone from his sepulchre; gladly would they shout. "this, our brother, was dead, and is alive again, was lost, and is found."

Sinner—dying sinner, shall they sing that song over you? O, how much better the melody of that song, than the sneers and taunts of devils, and the wailings of the pit!

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SERMON CCCXCII.

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MISTAKES IN EDUCATION.

"When I call to remembrance the unfeigned faith that is in thee, which dwelt first in thy grandmother Lois, and thy mother Eunice, and I am persuaded that in thee also." 2. Tim. i. 5.

The Apostle here expresses confidence in the personal faith or holiness of Timothy; and by affirming that two of his nearest relations had been also sincere believers, intimates that there was a connexion between his faith and theirs; or that theirs was in some way causative or instrumental of his:—an intimation which accords with experience. What of true religion has existed among men, has, with little exception, been found among the descendants of the faithful. And this is only what might be reasonably expected from the nature of holiness, and of the parental relation, and from the ordinances, declarations and promises of God.

The connexion, however, between parental and filial religion, is very far from being invariable. Some religious parents have unbelieving and profligate children; others have large families, with scarcely one religious child; and an extended family circle, with no irreligious member is uncommon. That religion has increased among men, shows that family religion has been advancing; but had the children of pious parents been invariably pious, the Church long since would have had possession of the world.

Why is it that the connexion in this case is broken; that the unfeigned faith which dwells in parents, has too often no lodgment in the hearts of their offspring?

It is very true, and may be very appropriately said, at this place, that piety does not descend like depravity from parents to children, by a principle of nature, or a divine constitution, or any fixed law, positive or natural. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, whether

the progenitors be spiritual persons or not. It is written of the saints, the sons of God, that they were by nature, the children of wrath, even as others; and that their difference from others, is referrible to a birth, which was not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. In confirmation of which all the instances of irreligious offspring from holy ancestors, may be justly adduced.—It is, therefore, not the mere consideration of piety in parents, that should lead us to look for piety in their children. Parents generally transmit, in some measure, their physical peculiarities, and so lay a foundation in their children, for natural excellence or degeneracy, for refined and elevated, or for comparatively low constitutional propensities. But holiness is always the immediate product of the renewing and sanctifying influence of the Holy Spirit. The only child ever born into this world, who did not need to be born again, was the Holy Child Jesus, and the fact that no moral pollution was contracted in his unparalleled generation, is thus explained by the angel to his virgin mother. The Holy Gost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that Holy Thing which shall be born of thee, shall be called the Son of God.

This important fact, however, does not suffice as an answer to our question, unless it be true,—Either that renewing grace is withheld in some instances by the arbitrary will of God; or that in some instances this grace is inadequate; or that in some instances parents cannot, or finally, that they do not, through voluntary negligence avail themselves of its proffered aid.

The first is not true. No design, arrangement, agency, or decree of God, can be assigned as responsible for the fact, that pious parents have unholy children. God has declared himself averse to it, has made provisions against it, and has appointed means for its prevention. And it cannot be, that he has a secret purpose, adverse to the efficiency of his own appointments. This sufficiently shows that it cannot be accounted for simply by resolving it into the will of God.

The second is not true; namely, that the Divine provisions against native depravity, are sometimes in themselves, inadequate. It is manifest, that all children are not alike in respect to the disadvantages of the original guilt. Some from the beginning have unhappy physical peculiarities. Some seem naturally inclined, others disinclined to piety. But it surely cannot be that God gives us children, of such constitutional qualities, that even in defiance of his grace, they must perish. However favorable to piety may be early indications in some children, they will not become true saints without the grace of God: and however unfavorable may be these indications in other children, Divine grace surely

can sanctify them. Parental piety should neither presume in the one case, nor despair in the other. In both cases the course of wisdom and of duty is the utmost diligence in waiting on God for his blessing.

The third, we must think, is not true; that is, that though God's grace be adequate, there are cases in which parents, to whom the advantages of this grace are offered, cannot, in any way, avail themselves thereof in behalf of their children. We must reject this supposition, because it impeaches God of tantalism in his overtures of grace. For such tantalism there palpably is, if there be in fact the alleged impracticability.

It remains, therefore, that the evil be referred to *parental delinquency*. We are reduced to this conclusion, apparently by the force of irresistible demonstration. We see not how it can be evaded. Parental delinquency breaks the connexion between parental and filial piety, or solves the melancholy and painful fact, that holy parents have unbelieving and irreligious children.

The importance of this conclusion, however, in its practical relations, depends on what is meant by parental delinquency. It will deprive it of all power, to understand by it a mere coming short of perfection in the business of education. Since, if perfection were the condition of the Divine favor, all men would feel compliance impracticable, and would thus be hindered by despair from seriously attempting it. If this were what is meant, to make out, that the irreligion of children is owing to delinquency on the part of parents, were to do what in practical application would amount to nothing.

But perfection, under the economy of grace, is not the condition of the promises—a condition which never was, never will be, and metaphysical precision apart, never can be fulfilled: and nothing were more reproachful to the Divine mercy than to conceive of it as refusing its blessing to all endeavors on our part, which are in any respect or degree defective. The delinquency in question, therefore, must be one not from simple perfection, but from a practicable faithfulness—a faithfulness to which parents by the grace of God can attain. The truth then, before us, in demonstrative evidence, is, that the children of the pious become in too many instances irreligious and die in unbelief, not from the arbitrary will of God, nor from inadequacy in his provisions against such a consequence, nor from incompetency in parents to avail themselves of these gracious provisions, but from *avoidable and criminal* default on the part of parents; these epithets being applied in no technical sense, but as they are freely used in common conversation.

This is a proposition, confirmed by all we can know of God, from both reason and revelation; and also by the Divine economy to-

ward mankind. It is a recorded fact, that before God would suffer the human race to commence its generations under the power of the Fall, he introduced his remedial system; and it is impossible for us to doubt, that if mankind had availed themselves of the advantages of that system, as they might, and ought to have done, the disastrous influence of the apostasy would have been counteracted and the race recovered. A different belief from this is inconsistent with all just conceptions of the Deity, as a being of pure benevolence.

We will now proceed with our main design in this discussion, namely, to remark in some particulars on such mistakes or defaults in educating children, as we have already generally characterised as avoidable and inexcusable. We enter on a wide field, but we shall limit our views to such things as we deem of the highest concern, and most to our edification, and these we shall reduce to a few distinct heads.

I. Doubtless one of the chief causes of inefficiency in conducting this great business, is, mistake, or at least indefiniteness of conception, as to its just *purpose, or object.* That object, ultimately, is to prepare our children for the sublime end of their creation—to glorify God, and enjoy him forever in heaven. But as the way to heaven lies through the earth—as man's eternity takes its stamp from the manner in which he fulfils his part on the present stage of existence—the object to be directly pursued is preparation for action here—*aptitude* and *furniture* for meeting the calls, exigencies, and conflicts of this life.

Is it not to be feared that this idea of the design of Christian education has been too often absent, or at least so vaguely and feebly received, as to have little practical influence? The future existence of children which, generally, alas, is disregarded in their education, seems, in some instances, to have so filled the minds of parents in their religious care for them, that their present existence could hardly have place as a legitimate object of *that kind* of care. The two states of beings have been rather regarded as antagonistic to each other, than as what they truly are in *effect*, one and the same state. Education of course, *so far as religion has to do with it*, has, exclusively, respected in some sort, eternity, not time; nay, it has been so managed as to give disqualification for all just intercourse with time and its affairs. The natural consequence is, that the children either become visionary recluses, or what is much more common, the victims of worldly temptation and corruption.

Not only should the education be conducted with this life in thought, definitely and distinctly, but discrimination should be made between the different parts of life; and that particular part

should be kept most in mind, in which the active energy of man should be chiefly exerted; namely, *the business of his calling*. Here it is, that the Christian character is required to develope itself; here, that Christ is to be served, and God glorified on the earth. It is not in contemplation but in action, that man meets the trial of his spirit, and works out his destiny. It is not by his prayers, but by his fruits, that his character is known, and God honored before men. And the greater portion of each one's active life-time should be, as with the Christian it surely is spent in the discharge of his business. It is indeed but a fraction of time comparatively, that should be ordinarily given to anything else. A part of it should be for recreation, and a part for devotion, but the mass should be for business. This of course is the important part of human life, to which educational discipline should have paramount respect. But is this the common impression of the end to be mainly pursued in Christian education, namely, qualification for the conduct of business? We are almost afraid that the doctrine inculcating it will be regarded as a paradox. If there be danger of this, is it any longer surprising that there should have been so little success in the religious training of children? If in the processes of education there has been a misapprehension; nay, if there has not been a *clear* and *strong* conception of its chief object, there could have been no *effectual* reference to it. How then could its attainment, as the result, have been expected? Why should we look to see the rising generation coming forth to devote *the labors* of their life to God? If they get through the world creditably and comfortably, doing their business as others do theirs, and observing set times and duties of devotion, is not this the just amount of what could have been reasonably anticipated from their religious training? That they should live among men, in all things, as the servants of Christ, going out and coming in, buying and selling, receiving and spending, eating and drinking, *to the glory of God*,* why should we hope to see such a consequence, from a discipline in which the *aim to produce* it is wanting?

* For an illustration of the *idea* here, which from the familiarity of the language, seems to have in many minds a very indefinite impression, let the reader take the following extract from the record of an example in the works of President Edwards "Oh, how good, said the person once, is it to work for God in the day time, and at night to lie down under his smiles! High experiences and religious affections in this person have not been attended with any disposition at all to neglect the necessary business of a secular calling, to spend the time in reading and prayer, and other exercises of devotion; but worldly business has been attended with great alacrity as part of the service of God; the person declaring that it being done thus it was found to be as good as prayer. These things have been accompanied with exceeding concern and zeal for moral duties, and that all professors may with them adorn the doctrine of God their Saviour; and an uncommon care to perform relative and social duties, and a noted eminence in them; a great inoffensiveness of life and conversation in the sight of others; a great meekness, gentleness and benevolence of spirit and behavior: and a great alteration in those things that formerly used to be the person's failings."

Let us not be misunderstood. We do not mean to say that in training our children in the nurture of Christ, the powers of the world to come, the things of the great, awful, eternal future, should not be exerting themselves upon our hearts with commanding and controlling sway. Or, that regarded in itself, or apart from its relations to eternity, this life should not be to us as a vapour, which appeareth for a little moment and then vanisheth away. To educate a child for this life so regarded, were to do it an injury, compared to which its murder would be the tenderest mercy. This is true; but on the other hand it is likewise true, that when the training proceeds with such impressions from the infinite future on the parent's heart, as lead to no measures of specific preparation in the child for meeting this life's responsibilities and temptations, it is as some great force which spends itself to little purpose for want of a hand to guide it to its mark.

II. But perhaps the principal source of error in the training of children, is in not beginning the business soon enough. Something should be done in the way of preparation and earnest prayer, before we can begin our educational appliancies,—before our children are born; but our short-coming commonly appears, not only in omitting or slightly attending to this, but in suffering the first years of existence to pass away without seriously attempting much in training our offspring for Christ. What a deplorable mistake! Were our eyes opened to see it, as it is, there is scarce an error among men, that would strike us as more to be lamented. It cannot but have consequences of the greatest importance. Even the first days should be improved as part of the seedtime of character and destiny. If man, as newly born, is without distinct exercises of intelligence he is not without susceptibility. Nor is the first action of his senses without influence on that godlike nature, which in such exquisite tenderness lies concealed in his frame of flesh. The shadow of a cloud, it has been said, does not pass over the face of a field without making some change in it: however this may be, certain it is that an infant does not fix its notice for the first time on surrounding objects without taking some inmpression from them? These objects all have their influence, and if it be undesirable in itself, its result in the child's susceptible nature must be unhappy. It is not necessary to this effect, that intelligence should have begun its operations; our nature can be effected through ether means. Impressions on the senses, even in adults, need not the deductions of reason, or the distinct notices of the understanding, in order to have influence on them of great importance. It may therefore be essential to the highest well-being of a child, that 'holiness to the Lord' should shine in the features of those whom its eyes first look upon, and control the

hands that handle it, and arrange the circumstances of its birth-chamber, and regulate every little function of its infantile nurture.

But how far is our parental care from such early attentions! How long after the developement of intelligence is it, that we commence in earnest with our measures of education? Why this delay? Can we think it of little consequence to the immortal interests of a child, that its nature be not subject to holy influences, when the formation of conscience begins; when the first discriminations are made between right and wrong, good and evil? Yet is it not, as a general fact, incontrovertible, that these discriminations proceed to the third or fourth year without much direct pains, to keep them under Christian direction? There may be a general influence in the family and in parental example, favorable to their just exercise, but the child's intelligence at this very early period, is supposed to be too small to make its direct, not to say its elaborate tuition, according to Christian principles, important, or to any considerable extent practicable.

Was ever any judgment farther from truth than this estimate of infantile intelligence? Let us but consider the amount of knowledge which a child of common capacity requires before the completion of its third year. The mind of that child has already advanced to a vast size, compared to what it was at its beginning. It has already become a great treasury of knowledge. How many persons, places, things, does he know? What a store of ideas has he in his understanding? How many comparisons has he formed among them? How many logical conclusions has he drawn? He has acquired the free and easy and delightful use, perhaps, of more than one language, and can call a great multitude of names, and has an admirable skill in constructing sentences and making discourse. Shall the intelligence which has compassed all this in *less than three years*, be considered too small to demand much industry and pains in securing, if possible, its just exercise and discipline? Yet such it would seem is the view generally taken of it, even by Christian parents!

It is appalling to think seriously of the consequences to a child, of making so little of this period of its life. Human nature, we know, begins the exercise of intelligence under the power of moral depravity; but is it so that this power, for three years, has been presiding over all those multifarious operations of intelligence which have been going on in the soul of the child? Yes, and more than this, that evil power has been all this time growing in strength. The moral corruption of the child, therefore, has been advancing with the progress of its intellectual powers; the latter, thus far, have been the servants of the former: and will they not also, in the three years to come, and with increased probability, in the next three years, if the child should live so long? And is it to be

thought unimportant whether corrective influences be used or not, at the initial stage of being?

But is any success to be hoped for from these influences applied so early? We answer promptly, much, every way. The opinion has forced itself upon the most enlightened and judicious observers of infant life, that it is in this precise period, for the most part, that the seeds of character are planted—the elements formed of the leading power, the moulding and fashioning agency in the moral functions and habits of the soul. Is this opinion ill-founded? We believe that it will endure the severest examination. We cannot doubt, that the day which is to reveal all secrets, will confirm this proposition, that man's infancy, comprehending the first five or six years, forms ordinarily the die of his immortality. Even the exceptions are witnesses to the efficacy of the agents which now exert themselves. If by the divine blessing on educational labors, in future years, the effect of unpropitious influence now generated, is so far set aside, that the work of improvement can proceed, still there is an unfavorable cast of character growing out of that early period, which there is no possibility of correcting entirely.

Still we are afraid, that our earnestness on this point will be unheeded; that the impression will remain, that little can be done by education in these first years. It seems to be thought, very extensively, that the early life of a child must needs advance under the sway of evil: not any culpable remissness, but dire necessity is the cause. What shall we say? Is it not time that this sentiment, whether formally maintained, or lurking amid other unuttered impieties of the heart, were discarded, as an impeachment of the Divine goodness, and an apology for sin? Is it indeed our nature's terrible misfortune, its malignant fate, that it must pass through a period of years, advancing in depravity, exposing it every moment, meanwhile, to inecoverable ruin? Was it to give an advantage to the author of evil for making sure of man's destruction, that the first years of his existence were made so tender and susceptible? What else must we think, unless we would reproach our Maker, but that precisely the reverse was the purpose of this arrangement—that God presents our offspring to us, not untainted by sin indeed, (for how could that be without a miracle, seeing we are polluted,) but in comparative innocence, and the most yielding and governable of all objects—to the intent that we may have the best possible facilities for applying the influences of recovering mercy? What though the virus of depravity infect the race even in the embryo of being? Has not God appointed provisions and ordinances of grace against that original poison? And if these, the appropriate means of salvation are faithfully applied, does not analogy oblige us to think, that precisely because the time is so early, the success is more probable?

And why should it be thought that there is any insurmountable difficulty in bringing infant life under religious influence? In moral beings, intelligence and *conscience* are simultaneously developed; and where there is sin, conscience may be made to take cognizance of it, and under just instruction, conscience in a child, can scarcely be opposed; and with a quickened conscience in the presence of moral evil, a sense of the necessity of an atonement springs up; thus in the spirit of a little child, the groundwork may be laid of an experimental knowledge of the gospel.

We give it, therefore, as our full conviction, our absolute and abiding testimony, that there is scarcely a more egregious and pernicious mistake among mankind, than that of disparaging and neglecting the first years of human life.

III. Overlooking, or not duly considering the depravity of human nature in conducting the business of education, leads to inefficiency and failure. Human nature is depraved in our children; it is much more depraved in the world, amongst whom, if death does not prematureiy remove them, they must pass their days. To disown or disregard the truth in respect to either fact, is to open a floodgate of practical error.

Christianity in all its peculiar provisions and teachings, assumes that moral depravity even in children, is a poisonous infection of such terrible power, that it bids utter defiance to all lenitives, all management, in every form, from man and creatures; and will yield to no other than the renewing agency of the Spirit of God. The influence of education apart from this agency, may accomplish many things. It may develope in a beautiful symmetry the constitutional excellencies. It may repress constitutional excesses. It may correct constitutional vices. It may cultivate the natural sentiments, refine the tastes, exalt and ennoble the temper and tone of the mind, give dignity and grace to the manners, light and authority to conscience, force and principle to character. It may inspire respect and reverence for the rites and solemnities of religion; form religious habits, and fill the breast with high religious veneration. All this, and more it may do. But there are some things it cannot do: it cannot shed abroad the love of God in the heart, nor displace our natural enmity to God, nor bring the soul under the power of the cross, nor diffuse through it the spirit of Jesus, nor teach it to live by faith, nor introduce into it any one of those fruits of the Holy Spirit, without which all virtue is reprobate, all religion a name or a delusion, and all check upon native depravity ineffectual and temporary.

Now we submit the question, what is, what must be the difference in educational appliances, of justly regarding, or of diregarding this grand cardinal fact concerning the potency of moral evil in our fallen nature? With what difference in parental views and im-

pressions will the business be conducted? Will the parent who keeps it in mind, that amidst the highest of earth's advantages and influences, amidst the purest society and best preceptors he can find among men, his child will remain subject to an inward vitiosity, which will soon prove its remediless ruin, if the Spirit of God withhold his renewing power—will such a parent, we ask, in training his child, have no difference of *feeling* from one who disbelieves this fact, or does not give it just consideration? Or will an abiding difference of feeling here make no difference in *practice*? We assume that no one denies the necessity of education. We assume farther, that the parent of whom we speak, looks for the cooperation of the Spirit only as sought for and depended on, in the use of appropriate means; and our question relates to the difference which this parent's convictions on the point before us, must make in the *sort* of educational power which he uses. We cannot stay to trace out this difference particularly. It will spontaneously occur to every one, how such a parent will address himself to his work, with a holy fear and trembling, and with an earnestness and importunity of prayer, which, in the other case, must needs be wanting, And it will also occur to every one, how an education thus conducted, must differ from one not having this grand peculiarity, though in all other respects equal or superior, as the influence of heaven differs from that of earth. We will mention but one thing wherein the difference will reveal itself directly in the consciousness of the child. It is the impression which the child receives of what so deeply affects the parent's heart. The child cannot but learn through the parent's feelings, its own need of, and dependence on, the Holy Spirit.—It learns this, provided the parent abides in the lively conviction of the same fact, more effectually than it could by any other means. The momentous lesson is incessantly inculcated, day and night, directly and indirectly, by silence as well as by speech, under the great advantage which the parental and filial relations afford. Now what we wish to be pondered here, is the probable difference in result, as to the religious character and destiny of a child, whose soul is kept under an educational influence of this sort, and of one who wants this specific influence, however favored in all other respects.

IV. The effect of misbelief or misjudgment as to the moral state of the world is scarcely less unfavorable.

As Christianity presupposes the entire depravity of our nature even in infancy, so it presupposes and declares that the advance of unrenewed man in years, is a progressive subjugation to the power of moral evil; and accordingly it represents the state of human society—the unrenewed world—in its relations to God and eternity, as most deplorably and desperately corrupt. The manner of

its testimony on this subject, shows plainly that it intends to make the strongest possible impression; declaring of the world, that it *lieth in wickedness*, that it is in the interest and service of Satan, the great enemy of God, nay, that it hath taken Satan for its god; and demanding the utter renunciation of worldliness, as the unchangeable condition of the Divine mercy. It has ever been a risk of reputation in the teachers of Christianity to affirm this, but they are not its teachers, who do not declare it with much distinctness and earnestness. While the record stands in the Book of God that whatsoever is in the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world, so that if any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him; and not only so, but that the friendship of the world is enmity with God; while these with a great multitude of parallel scriptures, stand in the sacred volume in such bold relief; the ministry were false to Christ, if its voice on this subject were either silent, or such as to the world's ear would be acceptable or tolerable. Now what if the parental heart, in conducting the education of children, has habitual misgiving, or is without an assured and living faith in respect to the view given by Christianity of the moral state of this world? Is not such an unconvinced parent, in one most important particular, disqualified for his work? Our children are to go into the world, where they must either enter into conflict with the powers of evil, and by the grace of God overcome them, or else fall in and be workers together with them against Christ and his Church. If we bring them up in the nurture of the Lord, we train them for battle and for triumph on the world's rebellious stage. But shall we, or can we so train them, if instead of recognizing the world as lying in wickedness, and hastening to destruction, we look upon it with eyes of complacency or desire, or allowance? It will be the world's spirit in us, that will give the world favor in our view, and having that spirit ourselves, we shall with entire certainty, yea, even of necessity, if Divine grace do not prevent, infuse it into the hearts of our children. We cannot do otherwise. We shall teach them worldliness even in our silence, and the spirit of the world which is in them, will make them apt and swift learners without any other instruction. We may teach them religion too, but we shall give them impressions on religious subjects, which will rather prepare them for relations of friendship with the world, than those of a determined and triumphant disconformity to it. To a certain style or manner of religion, the world makes no objection. Man is constitutionally formed for religion, and of all characters, that which tastefully interblends religion with worldliness, so as to give the latter its chosen place, stands highest, especially among the more respectable and elevated classes.

It is, therefore, palpable, how radical mistake in educating children, must needs proceed from a wrong view of the moral condi-

tion of the world on the part of parents. No child receives a Christian education who is not trained to go into the world, not to pass smoothly and reputably along in the current of worldliness, but with enduring firmness and meekness, to maintain the most uncompromising opposition to it. This it is, and nothing short of this, to live among men the life of a Christian. The purpose and end of Christianity is, a complete moral revolution in human society—to 'make all things new' in the commanding principles and objects of human existence: and they are not exemplyfying the spirit of Christ without which no one is entitled to the name of a Christian, or serving the cause for which Christ came into the world, who do not make this the grand purpose and endeavor of their own lives.

If, therefore, we would know whether we are earnestly and with probability of success, bringing up our children in the nurture of Christ, we should look well to ourselves, as to the impressions and feelings with which we habitually regard that mass of active being among which our dear offspring are so soon to intermingle. Has the world no such appearance to us, no such spiritual character and relations, no such prospects in reference to the future state, as to make us think it very important that our children, while in the midst of it, should be altogether distinct and heaven-wide separate from it, as to its spirit, principles, purposes, and ends of life? Nay, let us propose the question to ourselves more narrowly. Let us inquire if we think there is but little to be excepted to, little to be renounced and resisted in the better, yea, even in the very best portion of worldly society? How do we look upon the accomplishments, the acquisitions, the company, the pleasures, the elegant modes and ways of life, of the highest class of all? Have we almost no objection to our children's falling in and taking their course here on account of these great advantages? Alas! if we do not think that all these advantages multiplied a thousand fold, would be infinitely unworthy of being coveted for our children at the sacrifice of their non-conformity to the world, how essentially, how completely are we disqualified for the work of their education? Nowhere is the spirit of the world in greater power and strength, nowhere is it more difficult to be opposed, nowhere is it more ensnaring, more seducing, more triumphant, than in this upper sphere of its dominion. If when we look into it, we are so taken with its charms that we can no longer see much to be dreaded or deprecated from worldly influences here, our children will probably have an eternity of regret, that the business of their early training did not fall into different hands. With such a profound blindness to the true character and state of the world, we can give them no other education than one which assumes that man was made not to glorify God, and shine forever in his kingdom above the brightest of the firmanent, but to glitter for a moment to the eye of sense, and then pass away into the blackness of darkness forever.

V. We have now considered, briefly, what we take to be the chief sources of mistake in the education of children. There are certain particular errors, perhaps not easy to be classed, which if the time permitted, we might here expose with much advantage, but of them we must content ourselves with the briefest notice.

1. Children are often led by the example, if not by the instructions of their parents, to think of Christianity as unsocial and misanthropic; an enemy to innocent enjoyment, the cultivation of taste and improvement in our temporal condition; indifferent if not unfriendly to the institutions of society and the progress of science and art. How fatally erroneous and hurtful is this impression concerning the holy religion of Christ. Christianity though anti-worldly, is not morose or anti-social. It is in all respects the best friend of human happiness. It seeks the highest advancement of man in all his legitimate powers, tastes, capabilities and enjoyments. It does not identify worldliness with the work and ordinances of God, but directs us how to use every creature of God for our good, and bids us to rejoice therein with thanksgiving. To give children the contrary persuasion, is to set the nature which God has given them, at variance with the instrument of their salvation.

2. Where Christianity is not thus made to frown with malignant severity on the institutions and customs of social life, it is still too often invested with the garb of despotism, in other respects, by parental influence and example. The parents, though Christians, are not habitually happy and heavenly in the frame of their minds; they do not abide in that spiritual mindedness which is life and peace. They are not sufficiently free of legalism with its attendant bondage of fear and doubt, of severity and sternness; and it is well if they do not either infuse the same unlovely spirit into their children, or prejudice them fatally against the gospel, by leading them to identify evangelical piety with inward gloom and austerity.

3. Very unhappy results often spring from the want of discrimination in suiting discipline to the constitutional peculiarities of children. Christianity is always one and the same, but in applying it to individuals, it may be essential to our success, that our manner vary, to correspond with their varying characters and circumstances; and the rule of becoming all things to all, is as important to parents in educating their children, as it is to ministers of the gospel in winning the souls of men. Some children need indulgence which to others would be ruinous; and some require the intermixture of indulgence with severity, in a proportion which only the wisdom that cometh from above can adjust.

4. The end of much pains in education is often defeated by cross influences on the part of the parents; as when one of them is not pious, and by example, if not by precept teaches irreligion to the children: or, when one has a different standard and kind of religion, and a different judgment as to measures and principles of discipline, from the other.

5. Parents sometimes injure the souls of their children, by their manner of correcting them; administering punishment more in anger than in faithful love, and using greater severity against accidents or carelessness, than against moral trespasses or obliquities.

6. The power of education may be fatally impaired by not proceeding in the work, as God's representatives and ministers, appointed by him to this very thing; but undertaking it, as exclusively of our own will and to answer our own selfish designs and ends;—the difference here being all the difference between the influence of God's name and authority, and that of sinful man's.

7. Finally, it is a quite common fault of parents, that they do not fall in with the measures of the church, for the spiritual good of children; neither desiring the prayers and labors of the church in their behalf, nor urging upon them with any becoming seriousness, a fulfilment of the sacred obligations arising from their connexion with the church. As if the covenant of infant baptism, both in respect to themselves and their children, were an empty ceremony of no significance or influence whatever, or were of itself efficacious and saving, independently of every other means and agency.

We close the discussion with two short remarks. In the first place, the glance we have now taken, at the causes of error in education, confirms us, in the conviction we expressed in the first part of the discourse;—namely, that it is owing, not to fatal necessity, but to a truly culpable delinquency on the part of parents, that there is so much of irreligion to be found in Christian families. The contrary doctrine, has sometimes assumed to itself great sacredness, as an essential part of orthodoxy; and in deference to it, the promises of scripture to parental faith and dilligence, have been understood in a sense which implies that they are rather proverbs than promises. But to say nothing of the violence which it offers to the word of God, and the reproach which it casts upon the Divine goodness, and the justification which it affords to one of the highest forms of human unfaithfulness, we are persuaded by considering the evil in question in but a portion of its manifest and well-known sources, that here is indeed the responsible means of what may be well termed, the grand hindrance to the gospel among

mankind. With this in our view, as illustrated by the foregoing observations, we do not wonder that the children of the church mingle with the world, in such frequency, that the work of God's recovering grace cannot be kept in an onward movement, without bringing in others to take the deserted places of baptized apostates. No, we see nothing to wonder at, but that Christian parents should care so little for the eternal well-being of their offspring, and should have so little thoughtfulness or sense of their own high privileges and far-reaching responsibilities.

In the second place, we are persuaded, that there is soon to be a greatly increased attention to the education of children in Christianity. The immense importance of this business must ere long be seen and acknowledged, as hitherto it hath never been. Already a favorable change has taken place; and this change must go forward, with increasing rapidity, as the set time for the conversion of the world draws on. Looking at the laws of our nature, the analogies of Providence, the experience of former times, and above all, at the explicit testimonies of the Divine word, we are constrained to believe, that the leaven of Christianity, will diffuse itself through the mass of human nature, not so much by the impulsive agency of societies for the reformation of particular evils, or even by local revivals of religion, as by the still and patient work of training up children in the nurture and admonition of the gospel. We would by no means be understood, as disapproving or thinking lightly of these instrumentalities: on revivals especially,—on mighty outpourings of the Holy Spirit, our hope rests, for the triumph of Christianity. But what we hold and what we would now enforce is, that these and all other agencies, will mainly prove favorable, by leading to one great silent reform throughout the families of Christendom, in the one matter of the religious education of children. Our chief wish is to arm this sentiment with such power, that it shall become a practical principle, throughout all the households of the saints on earth. We long to see every legitimate agency for promoting the cause of Christ in the most active and energetic exercise; and most earnestly would we pray that abundant effusions of the Spirit of God, may attend the exemplary use of these means of salvation; but still, what we rely upon more than all things else, for the universal and permanent spread of the gospel, is a baptism of the Holy Ghost upon parents, and the representatives of parents in the church, which shall show them what they ought to do in educating children for Christ, enable them to do it, and keep them engaged in the work with a diligence proportioned to its importance.

SERMON CCCXCIII.

BY REV. EDWIN F. HATFIELD.

NEW YORK.

THE LORD DEPARTED.

"And he wist not that the Lord was departed from him." Judges xvi. 20.

THE presence of God is the joy of his people, and the pledge of their prosperity. But, "woe to them," saith the Lord, "when I depart from them!"

This the son of Manoah found to his cost. His was a remarkable experience. Even before his birth he appears to have been the object of divine regard in a peculiar degree. A child of promise, from his youth up he received the blessing of God, and was favored above many. "The child grew, and the Lord blessed him." From an early age he was brought under the influence of the Spirit of God in a remarkable and extraordinary manner. "And the Spirit of the Lord began to move him at times, in the camp of Dan."

He soon became the wonder of his age, by reason of the marvellous physical strength with which he appeared to be endowed, and gave rise, perhaps, to the fabled Hercules of heathen mythology. In some way unknown to us, and unknowable by man, the Spirit of the Lord imparted unto him a power that made him a terror to his enemies. On the occasion of his meeting a young lion at the vineyards of Timnath, we are told that "the Spirit of the Lord came mightily upon him, and he rent him as he would have rent a kid." It was because "the Spirit of the Lord had come upon him," that he was able to slay thirty of the men of Ashkelon, on another occasion. The same account is given of the power which he put forth, when, having been bound with two new cords and delivered into the hands of the Philistines, he burst them as if they had been flax burnt with fire, and slew a thousand of his enemies.

It has been much questioned whether Samson was truly a child of God or not. His life, it must be admitted, was very different

from that of David, and other holy men of honored memory. We can discover in it but little of the Spirit of adoption, and see but little, if anything, to confirm his claims to a place among the saints. It is to be borne in mind, however, that the record is short, and occupied more with the exploits of the man, and the wonders that he wrought in behalf of God's people, than with the life of God in the inner man of his heart. He is numbered by the apostle Paul among the Old Testament saints, "who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises," and the like; all of whom "obtained a good report through faith." If saved, it must have been, so as by fire.

That he was the subject, not merely of an occasional afflatus of the Spirit of God, but of an abiding operation, we may gather from the words of our text. His power was derived from his fellowship with the Holy Spirit. It was because of the abiding, or indwelling of the Spirit, that he was able to put forth such amazing strength. However necessary it was that, as a Nazarite, his hair should be unshorn, it was not in his locks that his might was treasured up. When he had been deprived of the hair of his head, it is said of him, that rising up after the deep sleep of which this advantage had been taken, he observed, "I will go out as at other times before, and shake myself;" not knowing "that the Lord was departed from him." In this departure of the Lord, or of the Spirit of the Lord, was his subsequent deficiency. "The Lord had departed from him," and therefore he became a prey to his enemies, and was brought to an untimely grave.

No truth is more clearly or frequently taught in the word of God, than that the Holy Spirit holds intercourse with human beings on the earth. How this intercourse is held, or in what way the Spirit of God influences, sways, and controls the spirit of man, is not to be explained or known in this present corporeal state. "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth; so is every one that is born of the Spirit."

But it does not follow that we are to reject a doctrine, because there is something mysterious pertaining to it. The world is full of mystery. Man is a mystery to himself. God is all mystery. We must reject all these, and everything else connected with them, if we refuse to believe in the existence of anything that is at all mysterious or incomprehensible. That God is able to commune with the soul of man, to hold intimate intercourse with the human spirit, and to establish an uninterrupted correspondence with his intelligent creatures, must be admitted. You know it, and I know it. That he does do it is matter not only of revelation but of experience. Who is there among us that has not been made to know it again and again? The unconverted are, in every land where the gospel is preached, brought in unnumbered instances to

feel that there is a reality in these influences of the Spirit. When the truth is applied with peculiar power to the heart and conscience, and they are constrained to tremble in review of their sins and in prospect of a judgment to come, they cannot but own that "it is God which worketh in them."

"Say, sinner! hath a voice within
Oft whispered to thy secret soul,
Urged thee to leave the ways of sin,
And yield thy heart to God's control?
Sinner! it was a heavenly voice,
It was the Spirit's gracious call;
It bade thee make the better choice,
And haste to seek in Christ thine all."

But it is the child of God, more especially, that, by being made the subject in a peculiar degree of these influences, knows the reality of these gracious operations. Having been born of the Spirit he cannot but recognize his heavenly parentage. Taught by the Spirit, and led by the Spirit, he has a delightful perception of his divine teacher and guide, and cometh up from the wilderness, leaning on his beloved. Sealed by the Spirit of promise, and made a temple of the Holy Ghost, he cannot deny a present Deity. Brought to feel, from day to day, the constraining power of this Holy One, he often finds occasion to exclaim,

"Sure the blest Comforter is nigh!"

The fact, therefore, of this spiritual intercourse being admitted,—a fact that lies at the very foundation of the Christian scheme, and of revelation itself,—your attention will be directed to two considerations growing out of this fact, and suggested by the words of the text. Consider, first, the evil of losing the Spirit, and, then, that, however great the evil, we may not at the time be aware of it.

I. The departure of the Holy Spirit is an unspeakable evil.

If God can establish this spiritual intercourse, as we have seen, then he can also dissolve the connection thus formed, whenever he pleases. That this connection is frequently dissolved, wholly or in part,—that the Spirit of God, having communed to some extent with the human spirit, does at times, in particular instances, depart from the soul, is a fact as well attested as that of his intercourse with man. When Samson awoke from that fatal sleep into which he had been lured by his vile paramour, and went out to bestir himself, as at other times, he found, though he knew it not at first, that "the Lord had departed from him." That blessed Spirit, which, dwelling in him, and imparting to him grace in every time of need, had made him a terror to his enemies, and a tower of strength to his friends, had left him—and left him a prey to his foes.

The same truth is also taught in other passages of the word of God, and in numerous instances of similar bereavements. We are told in various language to court and cherish the Spirit of God, and admonished not to provoke him to leave us. "My Spirit shall not always strive with man." "Woe, also, to them when I shall depart from them. Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God." "Quench not the Spirit."

It may seem to those who have no desire for the favor of the Almighty, no regard for the joys of fellowship with God, no wish for the infinite bliss of heaven, no fear for the terrors of the world to come, who live to the flesh, and care not for another world, to be a light thing to lose the presence of the Spirit, and to be forsaken of the Holy One of Israel. But to one who has a soul and knows its worth, who is not willing to be shut out from the paradise of God, and to have his portion in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone, there cannot be a greater evil than to be abandoned by the Spirit.

Infinitely great are the blessings that flow to the soul from a connection with the Holy Ghost, such as has been suggested. It is by the presence and operations of this Divine agent that

The soul of the stupid sinner is roused to a proper sense of his undone condition:

The sinner is constrained to confess, by being made conscious of his guilt, that he deserves the wrath and curse of the Almighty:

The convicted soul is made to feel its helplessness, to renounce entirely its own righteousness, and to look for salvation simply and alone to Jesus Christ, the only Redeemer of God's elect:

The soul, that was dead in trespasses and in sins, is made alive, born again, and made a new creature, being translated from the kingdom of Satan into the kingdom of God's dear Son:

The work of sanctification, from the very first stage of regeneration to the last of glorification, is carried on in the heart of the believer:

The child of God is sealed and secured against all the wiles, craft, and malice of men and devils; and brought at last into the full possession of the promised and eternal inheritance.

Such are, in few words, the inconceivably blessed results of this spiritual intercourse. Not one of them all can be effected without it. This work is the prerogative of the Holy Ghost. To ascribe t to any other agent is to deny the faith. To impute to any Christian or any Christian church a denial of such honor to the Holy Ghost, is grievously to sin against God and his people.

If, then, these blessings all flow from the Spirit, how infinitely and indispensably important must it be for the sinner, the saint, the ministry, the church, to obtain and secure the presence and intercourse of the Holy Ghost! What the life is to the body, the Spi-

rit of God is to the soul; and vastly more. When the life of the body is gone, death ensues as a matter of course. When the Spirit leaves the soul, death spiritual ensues; and if the Spirit return no more, death eternal. The sinner from whom he departs for the last time is given over to utter despair and hopeless ruin. The Christian from whom he departs for a season, becomes an object of pity; and the Christian community, thus forsaken, becomes a prey to worldliness, formality, corruption, and soul-destroying error.

In confirmation of these views, survey the desolations of former days. Visit the seven churches of Asia. Behold the deplorable condition of those numerous churches that were founded by apostles, and built up by holy men that heard them. How lamentable has been for ages the state of the Greek, the Armenian, the Nestorian, the Jacobite, the Maronite, and the Roman churches! Learn a similar lesson from the Lutheran and Reformed churches of Europe, and the Protestant establishment of Great Britain.

Are there not also in our own land many mournful examples of the same dreadful calamity? May we not find, if not whole denominations, yet particular churches in every denomination, from which the glory is departed? Are there not, too, in every church, particular individuals from whom the Lord has departed as he did from Samson? May we not look around us, and within us, to-day, here, in this very house, and find not a few painful illustrations of this unparalelled evil? How is it with you, yourself, my hearer?

And is there—can there be, a greater calamity? "Cast me not away from thy presence," said the king of Israel, "and take not thy Holy Spirit from me." Take, O Lord! whatever thou wilt; but, Oh! take not away from thy people thy Holy Spirit!

> "'T is paradise when thou art here,—
> If thou depart, 't is hell."

II. *They from whom the Lord departs, are not always aware of it.*

The presence and agency of the Holy Spirit present no obstruction to the orderly operations of the soul with which this spiritual intercourse is established. The mind operates with as much freedom, at and after this connection and co-operation, as before. "Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty." There is more freedom than there was before,—freedom from evil and counteracting influences. The presence of the Spirit is not, therefore, at once perceived, nor his operations recognized. The soul may be acting under this sweet and heavenly influence, so freely, as not to be aware, at least for some time, of the presence of the Comforter.

In like manner, the Spirit may withdraw from the soul in so much quietness, and in a manner so entirely free from all violence, as to give not the slightest note of warning; as to afford not the slightest intimation of the calamity that is impending. It is not affirmed that such is always the case. It may be otherwise. But ordinarily, the departure of the heavenly visitant becomes known only as in the case of Samson. The man seems to himself to be the very same, and what he seems to be he is. The current of his thoughts and feelings flows on as before; there is, perhaps, neither less nor more obstruction. He wakes from his slumber, and goes forth, like the son of Manoah, to his ordinary pursuits, and "wists not that the Lord is departed from him."

Is it *a church and congregation* that are thus deserted? They may not be at all aware of it, or if at all, not by any means of the extent of the evil. They look upon themselves with as much complacency as ever. They confide as much in their superior strength as before; nay, they may be vastly more confident, and boastingly say with Loadicea of old, "I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing." They may have abundance of outward prosperity; their assemblies may be large, and respectable, and intelligent, and refined, and wealthy. They may be perfectly confident that theirs is "the true church," that they are in the line of the true succession, that they are "the people." And yet, with all this outward show, the very last spark of spiritual life may be just expiring. They may have the form of godliness, and deny the power thereof. There is a body, but the soul is gone. The Lord is departed. Their house is left unto them desolate. The Spirit has left them,and they know not that they are "wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked." They "wist not that the Lord is departed from them."

Is it a *ministry* that is thus deserted? It is not the laying on of hands, however orderly or canonically, that makes a minister. "Receive ye the Holy Ghost!" said the Redeemer, and, having with the word imparted the gift, he sent them forth to "teach all nations." It is the Holy Ghost that makes men ministers and makes them successful ministers of the New Testament. Deprived of this "earnest of their inheritance," and this seal of their acceptance, their "orders" are empty, powerless, and worthless. A minister of the gospel may be learned, intelligent, accomplished, highly-gifted with shining graces, eloquent, persuasive, winning, melting, subduing, "a capital sermonizer," a first-rate orator;—he may charm, and delight, and move his hearers from their very seats, by the irresistible fervor of his powerful appeals to the heart and conscience, and his whole congregation, that have hung in crowds upon the words that fell from his lips, may go away fully convinced that theirs is the most powerful and eloquent preacher in the city or in the land;—and yet this very man may be in the case of Sam-

son, his locks shorn, his strength gone, and the Lord departed from him. He may preach on, month by month, and year by year, with the approbation of the multitude, and almost worshiped by the crowd that flock to hear him, while, all the time, Satan, the great and wily Philistine, may be binding him and his hearers with cords of iron, to make them grind in the prison-house of despair.

If my voice could reach the ears of my brethren in the ministry, I would with all affection and tenderness ask:—Is it thus with any of you? Has the power of thy ministry gone, and art thou wondring at the cause? Perhaps, brother! the Lord, thy life, has withdrawn his Spirit from thee, and thou knowest it not. If so, it is no wonder that thy preaching is so barren—that thou thyself, though speaking "with the tongues of men and of angels," art "become as sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal." Remember, Lord! the sons of Aaron, and, Oh! take not thy Holy Spirit from them!

Is it a *child of God* that is thus deserted? Little does he think, perhaps, of the calamity that has befallen him. Like the lion of the tribe of Dan, he may say, "I will go out as at other times before, and shake myself," but he is not as he was before. He seeks his closet, and bows the knee in prayer; but he prays not as he did, nor with the fervor and sweetness and importunity of former days. The power of prayer is gone. It is mere lip-service. He goes to his Bible, he turns to the melting tale of "Christ and him crucified;" he reads,—but he might almost as well have closed the book before he began to read. He neither takes the sense, nor remembers what he has read. It is gone from him. His heart is not in it. His heart is elsewhere. He becomes uneasy, restless, and impatient. He is easily fretted. He is often betrayed into sinful passion. He speaks even to some of his best friends as one out of humor. Every thing goes wrong. Every thing is out of joint. Nothing suits him. Nothing succeeds with him as formerly. He goes from ordinance to ordinance, from church to church, from denomination to denomination, but gains no advantage, finds no relief. Or if any at all,

> "'T is but a poor relief he gains,
> To change his place, and keep his pains."

He finds fault with his minister, his elders or deacons, his fellow-Christians, "the church,"—of all but himself. His soul languishes, his gifts and graces wither, and all the symptoms of a spiritual consumption are upon him. His religion becomes a cold formality, dreary, comfortless and desolate.

All this while, it may be, he knows not what ails him. He wonders that he is not as he once was—that he feels not the same interest in the social meetings of the church, in the spiritual prosperity of his family and friends and fellow-Christians. Is it thus with

thee, my brother? Have I described thy case? Look now at poor Samson, going out as before, but alone, unattended as formerly by the Holy One. Is it not thine own condition? Wretched state! Alas! that any one should continue in it! The Spirit gone, and he wists not that the Lord is departed from him! The Lord help every poor backslider to lay it to heart, and to cry with David, "Restore unto me the joys of thy salvation."

Is it *an unconverted sinner* that is thus deserted? The Spirit, as we have seen, is busy with the unconverted wherever the word of divine grace is proclaimed. In seasons of the special outpouring of the Spirit, very many of the unregenerate are brought into a condition in which it may be said to one and another of them,—"Thou art not far from the kingdom of God." As long as the Spirit strives there is hope. If the Spirit departs, the sinner receives "the grace of God in vain." Under the gracious operations of the Holy Ghost, he is brought, perhaps, to feel that "the Lord's time" has come;—that "now is the accepted time," and that "now is the day of salvation." He is told not to grieve the Spirit, not to harden his heart, to submit himself to God, and to present himself a living sacrifice to God NOW. He feels the force of the appeal, has not a word to say against the truth, is conscious that every obstacle has been taken out of his way, and that he has only to fall into the hands of the Lord, in order to be at peace. But he hesitates, puts off the decision and the doing of his present duty, and continues to delay, hour after hour.

The crisis is past. He is the same as before, and yet not the same. He knows that he ought penitently to forsake his sins and return to the Lord, and he says: "At such a time I will do it." The time comes, but he feels a stronger reluctance than ever to do it. A feeling of insensibility, if it may be so called, steals upon him. The preaching moves him not as it did. By imperceptible degrees, one impression after another wears away, one fear after another departs, one care after another succeeds, until the very desire of being a Christian seems to have left him. The change is at no time sudden, but like the stealthy approach of twilight, or the flattering advances of the fatal consumption. It comes upon him unawares, "like a thief in the night."

He, of whom I speak, is all this while a most respectful member of the congregation. He believes as firmly as ever in the claims of the gospel, and is as firmly convinced of his need of its gracious provisions. He seeks the house of God on the Sabbath, renders a marked and exemplary attention to the preaching of the word, observes the strictest propriety in his daily conduct, and carefully refrains from all immorality. But he is not converted; he is, to all human appearance, far less likely to be converted, than he was weeks and months ago. He cannot see that he has done any thing to bring about such a result. He has statedly and carefully

used the means of grace, has put himself in the way of God's blessing, as he thinks, and wonders at his own stupidity. He rouses himself anew to make another effort for securing his soul's salvation, and says,—"I will go out as at other times before, and stir myself up;" but alas! he finds that he is not now as he was before. He is bound in fetters of brass, and his power is gone. And why? He delayed repentance; he refused to obey the voice of the Lord in "the accepted time," he grieved the Holy Spirit, and the Spirit is gone. The poor man is left to himself, and "he wists not that the Lord is departed from him!"

Woeful case, indeed! But, my impenitent hearer! is it not your own? I tremble for you lest yours should be this most unhappy state. I pray God that you may never know what it is to be cast entirely away from his presence. Fellow-sinner! I am in great heaviness on your account. I fear that you have thus grieved the blessed Spirit, and put away from you the day of grace. Do you tell me, that you will seek the Lord again, at least on a dying-bed? Do you fancy that your locks will then be grown again, and that you will then have power to burst the bonds of sin and death? Yes, indeed! if you are one of God's dear children. But if not, you have no such encouragement. There is not a single promise to meet your case. The Lord has departed, and, perhaps, never to return. Then, if he returns not, if he answer not when you call, if he turn a deaf ear to your intreaty,—then, alas!—and I tremble to record it, my heart bleeds at the very thought,—then the Philistine will bind you in fetters of adamant; then he will mock your dying agonies, and make sport with your cries and your groans in in the world of woe for ever!

Oh! that I could prevail upon you now to receive the Spirit—to listen to his voice—to welcome him to your heart! That Delilah who has so long beguiled you, and kept you from the Lord, will be your ruin, if you suffer her to put you to sleep, if you listen to her, and not to the Holy Spirit. Break away from the syren.—Lose not, I beseech you, your precious soul. I would persuade you, if I can, (and may God help me to prevail with you,) to give all up for Christ, before I leave you. When next we meet, it may be at the judgment-seat. The Lord prepare us now to pass that solemn test, and bring us to see his face in glory.

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SERMON CCCXCIV.

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STABILITY IN THE CHRISTIAN FAITH.

"Be not carried about with diverse and strange doctrines."—Heb. xiii. 9.

The Gospel was early corrupted with doctrines uncongenial to its nature. While the Apostles were yet living, false teachers insinuated themselves into the churches planted by their care. Judaizing teachers persuaded the disciples that they must be circumcised and obey the law of Moses, or their faith would not save them. It was with particular reference to their teachings, as the subsequent part of the chapter shows, that the Apostle addressed to his brethren of the Hebrews, the exhortation which I have now read. This particular form of doctrine has passed away; but others have taken its place; so that always and everywhere, the exhortation is pertinent; and more especially in this age of free inquiry, and consequent diversity of religious doctrine.

The duty inculcated is that of *stability in the Christian faith*:—which it will be my object now to enforce.

"Be not carried about with diverse and strange doctrines." The allusion is to ships at sea. Like these driven by contrary winds are unestablished minds under the influence of "diverse and strange doctrines." They say you must be circumcised or you cannot be saved. They tell you that you must observe the fasts and feasts of the Jewish ritual or you are heretics and schismatics; without the pale of the church and the blessings of the covenant. Do not hearken to them. You see the effect on those who do. They are tossed to and fro as vessels in a storm. They are driven out of their course and threatened with destruction. They are in doubt as to the truth of what they had believed; they profess now one thing and now another; and some at last "make shipwreck of the faith and a good conscience."

The doctrines referred to are described as being "diverse and strange,"—*diverse*, as they are inconsistent with each other—and *strange*, as they are inconsistent with the Gospel—unknown

or not received by the church of Christ and its accredited teachers—*strange doctrines*, as persons coming from a foreign land are *strange persons*. This is the explanation suggested by the preceding verses. "Remember them that have the rule over you, who have spoken to you the word of God, whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation," that is, the termination of their manner of life—their departure out of this world into the future. The reference probably is to Stephen, James, and perhaps, other holy and inspired men who had been their Christian teachers, and whose martyrdom must have left a deep impression on them. The Apostle would have them adhere to the faith which those men embraced, and which sustained them so honorably in their course of life and carried them so triumphantly above the dread of a cruel and ignominious death, "Jesus Christ," he adds, "the same yesterday, to day and for ever." always able, always willing to sustain those who repose themselves on him; intimating that their faith should in like manner be the same, firmly resting on Him as their eternal rock. Be not carried about with doctrines inconsistent alike with the faith of your spiritual guides and the simplicity of your trust in the Redeemer.

The same explanation is suggested by the words immediately following—"It is a good thing that the heart be established with grace, not with meats, which have not profited them that have been occupied therein." The Gospel is a scheme of grace. By this it is distinguished from every false scheme. Whatever doctrines deny, conceal, or frustrate the grace of God in the salvation of his people—his grace in their effectual calling by the working of his power—his grace in their justification through the redemption of Christ—his grace in their preservation by his indwelling Spirit unto eternal life; his grace in their election, before the foundation of the world, as the source of all the blessings of their salvation; are diverse and strange. It is therefore "good," approved of God, and for the peace and salvation of the soul, "that the heart be established" in a firm reliance on the grace of God, as here revealed, and not a distinction of meats as clean or unclean, according to an abrogated ritual.

I. That we be not carried about with diverse and strange doctrines, then, it is requisite, *in the first place*, that we take the word of God for the standard of our faith. It is our blessed privilege, my brethren, as it was of the Hebrews to whom Paul wrote, that to us, the Apostles of the Lord, whom he sent into all the world in his name to preach the Gospel to every creature, with the promise of the Holy Spirit to guide them into all truth, have spoken the word of God; whose faith therefore we are to follow. In the writings of the New Testament, which they, by the good providence of God have given to us, and in the

corresponding writings of the Old Testament, to which, as divinely inspired, they have annexed their Apostolic sanction, they being dead yet speak; and what they speak we are bound to receive with no doubt or hesitation as the word of God. This therefore is to be regarded and reverenced by us, as the rule of faith—the test of truth—the standard, according to which the doctrines which come to us, are to be proved to be doctrines "according to godliness," or "diverse and strange."

"This is the judge that ends the strife,
Where wit and reason fail."

On this single point hangs the question between the true witnesses of God and all the world beside. Deists say, "every man's own reason and conscience are to him the rule of faith. These alone must decide what he is to believe." So they have as many rules of faith and as diverse and strange doctrines as there are diverse and opposite decisions of man's frail, erring, biassed reason. The Jews say, "Talmud or oral law, and the Mishna, or second law, together with the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, are the rule of faith, all of equal authority;" and so, while the Scriptures, for these two centuries have been read in their synagogues every sabbath day, they by general consent, as their fathers did before them, have rejected him in whom those Scriptures are so manifestly fulfilled. Catholics say, "the writings of the fathers, and the decrees of the popes and councils, have equal authority with the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments. The holy Scriptures do not contain all that is necessary to salvation and are not sufficient, as the rule of faith. They are obscure and it is not for the common people to read them. Tradition, whether it regards matters of faith or practice is to be received as the true interpretation of the Scriptures." So, by millions they have departed from the faith, to pray to the virgin Mary, to worship images and crosses, to make confession to priests, to purchase absolution with penance or with money, to refuse meats which God has sanctified, and forbid marriage, to depend on the outward washing in baptism as conveying the inward grace, and the material bread in the Lord's Supper as giving eternal life. Thousands of Protestants so called, there are also, who while they profess to reverence the Bible, as *containing* the word of God, yet do not receive it, as *being itself* his word. "God," they say, "revealed to the prophets and apostles the great truths of religion, and left them to communicate these to mankind in their own way, with no security against the false colorings which their misconceptions put upon them." So they take it upon themselves to sit in judgment on the record: and having made all due corrections they tell us, that, according to it, there is no divinity in Christ, no personality in the Holy Ghost, no expiation for sin in the death of Jesus, no native corruption in man, no regeneration by the Spirit, no resurrection of the body, no devil, no hell, no

eternal punishment. And while these exalt their own reason as the standard by which God's word itself is to be tried, others there are of various names who exalt their own impressions, their imagined revelations, or what they call the inward witness of the Spirit, above the word of the Spirit. They care nothing for the letter of the Scriptures, the plain sense of the Bible, a reasonable exposition of its teachings, or a solemn observance of divine ordinances. They are above these carnal things. They have no need of doctrines and ordinances—no, not of the testimony of God himself as to what is truth. How then, men and brethren, shall we not be carried away with diverse and strange doctrines? "To the law and the testimony, if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them." The great principle of the reformation, *the Bible is the sufficient and only rule of faith*, must decide us. There is no other safeguard. There is no other standard. It is indeed true, that if you would receive your faith at the dictation of a self-created priesthood, with no thought or inquiry of your own, and if all men would do the same, then might there be one faith all over the world; but unless you are prepared to surrender the first privilege of a rational being, that of deciding for yourselves what pertains to your own highest duty and interest, you have no security against the deceivableness of unrighteousness by which a sinful world is tossed, but by taking the word of God, settled as it is forever in heaven, for your guide. And has God in very deed, in pity of our state, condescended to speak to us from heaven? Are the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments his word? Not only fraught, as the writings of good men generally are with divine truth, but themselves divine—given by inspiration of God? Then do they stand out alone among all the writings in this world. Then are they alone to be received by us as the rule of faith. "We are of God," they say who wrote them: "he that is of God heareth us; he that is not of God heareth not us; hereby know we the spirit of truth and the spirit of error." This, then, is the first requisite to stability in the christian faith, that we take the word of God as our rule.

II. That by searching the word of God we make ourselves acquainted with the true scheme of faith. That his word may avail us, it must be known; and it were an impeachment on his wisdom—a reflection on his words to suppose him to have so given it, that we are incapable of understanding it, or must necessarily be in doubt as to the truth of our interpretation of it; or to consider the fathers, who succeeded the apostles or divines of later days, better expounders of his mind and will than were the apostles themselves whom he selected, inspired and sealed for that very purpose. Reverence no doubt is due to the opinions of the fathers, and to the teachings of our spiritual guides now—

Christian ministers, the parents, the teachers whom God has ordained to instruct us in his word; but that our faith and hope may be in God, we must see for ourselves that what they teach is in truth the word of God. Helpers of our faith, we need as of every other concern temporal and spiritual; but then are mortal men our best helpers, when most they hide themselves behind the effulgency of those divine glories which they make to shine out before us.

It was the part of a noble mind in the Jews of Berea, to listen to the accredited teachers of the Gospel, with all readiness of mind, and, having done this, to search the Scriptures to see if these things were so. Had they not done both these, they had not believed. So must we do, would we not be carried about with every wind of doctrine; would we have settled opinions in religion, and opinions which we shall know are justified by the truth of God, and will stand confirmed in the light of eternity.

I have said we must become acquainted with *the true scheme of faith*. There is a scheme of faith—a system of doctrine—a body of truth—whose parts are mutually dependent and inseparably connected, and by the knowledge of which, therefore, the truth of the whole and of every part, commends itself with convincing power to the mind. It is, as I said before, essentially a scheme of grace. It supposes mankind, with no distinction, to be naturally fallen and perishing—deserving of eternal death and exposed to it—under the power of sin, and beyond all reasonable hope of self-recovery—dependent therefore on the grace of God, from the first to the last, for the blessings of salvation. That grace, as flowing forth to believers through the atonement of Christ, and by the quickening and sanctifying power of the Holy Spirit—the grace of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, in the great work of redemption, it is the peculiar glory of the Gospel to reveal. These doctrines are so wrought into every part of the scriptures, are so dependent on each other, and so united in one harmonious scheme, and withal they so commend themselves to every man's conscience that it is not easy for any one who has once seen them as they stand in the book of God, ever afterwards to disbelieve them, or hearken for a moment to doctrines, diverse and plausible as they may be, which are foreign to them. There are individuals, I know, who have fallen away from a good confession into one error after another, and some of them have landed in downright infidelity; but how many of them, when they witnessed that confession, blindly assented to forms of doctrine which they had been taught, without ever truly understanding and believing the doctrines themselves, which those forms were intended to express, another day will show. Some have said that they always stumbled at those doctrines—that they never understood or heartily believed them, and that their open renunciation of them was only a declaration of the secret misgivings which they had long before entertained

and therefore we presume that it is so with others, who, in like manner, have departed from the faith. This at least is evident, that would we be rooted and grounded in the faith, it is requisite, that having taken the word of God for our rule of faith, we seek an intimate acquaintance with the scheme of faith which it reveals.

III. It is above all things necessary, that by a humble submission of ourselves to the word of God, we have the true spirit of faith. On all subjects our impressions depend much on the state of mind in which those subjects are presented to us. It is more especially so with the great truths of the Gospel, laying their demands,as they do, upon the conscience and the heart, and requiring the unqualified submission of ourselves to the authority and grace of God. Here is the root of all the scepticism and unbelief —the diverse and strange doctrines abroad in the world--the contrariety of the Gospel to the pride, the self-will, the self-reliance, and the selfish and wordly desires of the heart; and this it is, which, being indulged in resistance of the truth, provokes an offended God, at last to abandon men to their own deceivings; because they have not the love of the truth that they might be saved but have pleasure in unrighteousness,God give them up to strong delusions to believe a lie. This consequently, it is, which makes needful the grace of the Holy Spirit to all true knowledge and effectual belief of the Gospel; and it is the experience and fruit of this grace in which consists that spirit of faith—that humbleness of mind,and submission to the teaching of divine wisdom and the control of the divine will, to which so many promises of establishment are given, and for which accordingly we should ever pray. This is that "spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of God," of which Paul speaks, "the eyes of our understanding being enlightened that we may know what is the hope of our calling, and what are the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints;" that "anointing," of which another apostle writes, which believers "have received, and which abideth in them," so that they have "no need that any man teach them, but as the same anointing teacheth them all things, and is truth and is no lie, and even as it hath taught them, they shall abide in him;" that "grace," by which in immediate sequence of the text, and in explanation of it, it is said to be "good that the heart be established," a principle of grace, leading us to repose ourselves firmly on the doctrines of grace. So, my brethren, will you not be carried about with diverse and strange doctrines.

IV. Let me now suggest a few thoughts concerning the importance of this establishment in the faith.

Many zealous Christians have but a feeble sense of this. What

they desire is feeling and stir and action. As for these doctrines, they say, let us leave them to ministers and professional divines—let them dispute them out in their own way—they but little concern us. And it must be admitted that there are speculative points on religion as on all other subjects, which but little concern the majority of men, and which unhappily have been the subjects of acrimonious debate. But to say of the leading doctrines of the Gospel that they do not concern us, is to say that the Gospel itself is not our concern. For what is the Gospel? Not a code of laws, nor a system of ethics, nor a mere appeal to the imagination or the feelings. In the language of Paul, it is a mystery—the mystery of God—the mystery hidden from ages everlasting in his own bosom, but now revealed unto men. In other words, it is the revelation of the glorious plan of his wisdom and love in our redemption. It is, therefore, a scheme of doctrine—something taught—and that which as taught is "the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth"—that, on the knowledge of which, all right feeling and all holy obedience depends. Stability in the Christian faith is therefore no less important than stability of Christian character, since without the former the latter cannot exist. There may be sympathetic emotion—there may be an excitement of religious feelings—there may be fiery zeal in the performance of religious duties where there is but little knowledge of evangelical truth; but these, having no root in themselves, founded in no enlightened principle, embodying no knowledge of those spiritual objects on which all holy affections terminate, and in view of which they are called forth, are as transient as the circumstances which gave them being.

What are those things which are the main subjects of Christian doctrine? They are the living God, our Creator, our Sovereign Disposer, our Supreme Ruler, our Final Judge. They are Jesus Christ, God manifest in the flesh, our Mediator with God, and the work of our redemption by him. They are the glorious inheritance purchased for us by his death, offered for our acceptance, and reserved for his saints to be revealed at the last day. They are the work of the Spirit, the terms of salvation, the way of life, the resurrection of the dead, the final judgment, and eternal rewards. And are these the subjects concerning which we can be contented to be tossed to and fro by every wind of doctrine? They are subjects compared with which all ordinary subjects of human regard are "trifles light as air"—subjects which have engaged the eager inquiries of holy men since the world began, which the angels desire to look into; which form our hearts and determine our conduct, just in proportion as the truth concerning them is understood and believed, and which, having formed us for heaven, will exalt our triumph, and call forth our admiring praises there forever.

What has not the God of mercy done to establish our faith on these subjects? For what end, beside, has he given us his lively oracles, or instituted the Christian ministry, or appointed the ordinances of grace, or sent into the world the Spirit of truth? What a long succession of prophets he has raised up from age to age, for this purpose inspiring them with the Holy Ghost! what an astonishing series of miracles he has wrought, confirming their doctrine with his own inimitable seal! What revolutions he has wrought in the kingdoms of men to form the subjects of the instructions here given, and verify the word that had gone before! How wonderfully did he separate a chosen people from the rest of the world, and spare and bless them, that he might commit to them his word, preserve the sacred deposit, and at length through them, give a finished revelation to mankind! How often have angels been sent as messengers of his will! How often has he himself appeared in miraculous symbols of his glory! And with what boundless condescension and grace did he at last send his own Son to be made flesh and so, in a mortal form, become the Great Teacher as well as the Great High Priest of our profession! And with what abounding grace did this Divine Teacher, having said and done all that wisdom and love could say and do in his personal ministry, authorise and endow his disciples to finish and seal the testimony and publish it abroad!—publish it, as he declared in the great commission on which he sent them, for the instruction and salvation, not of ministers and divines alone, but of "every creature!" Surely, then, there is no reasonable creature to whom the message comes, that can safely or innocently remain, in ignorance or doubt in regard to it.

Important beyond measure is enlightened and steadfast faith not only on account of its influence upon ourselves, but also on account of its influence through us upon others. We cannot ourselves be carried about with diverse and strange doctrines, without carrying others about with us; nor can our illumination shed its steady lustre on their path without guiding them in the way of life. How great is the evil or the good done in this manner, eternity alone can reveal. See the churches of Galatia under the ministry of Paul—peaceful, humble, tender, conscientious, devoted to God, attached to him as to their eyes, happy in their fellowship with each other, and joyful in the hope of eternal life. But the apostle leaves them, and other teachers come in—direct from Jerusalem—by whose imposing gifts and zeal, Jewish dogmas, and Jewish predilections are insinuated into their minds, and, in consequence, the simplicity of their faith in Christ, of their confidence towards God, and of their disinterestedness in his service is lost; they are filled with pride, distracted with contention, and alienated from the apostle, from each other, from the truth, and from God;—and all this in a few months, and by the influence of a few men. How often have

such results—such melancholy proofs of the inconstancy of men, of Christians, of entire churches, by the influence of false doctrine —been witnessed wherever Christ has been named, from that day to the present! In this view, how vast is the responsibility of Christian ministers; for it is they more commonly who give the lead to others. How great the responsibility, too, of parents, of teachers, of professors of religion in every relation of life! for without their concurrence false teachers can do nothing; and so also, it is only by their co-operation, under a faithful ministry "the body of Christ, speaking the truth in love, grows up unto him in all things." The responsibility resting upon us, my brethren, is affecting; and it must be met; it must be discharged; it cannot be evaded. Amidst all the diverse and strange doctrines that are abroad, and notwithstanding our own liability to error, we *must* know the truth and obediently receive it, and with all boldness inculcate and maintain it, "contending earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints," that so we may "save ourselves and them that hear us."

In more particular application of this subject to the present occasion,* I remark,

1. That it suggests the primary importance of the Christian ministry. "When he ascended up on high he led captivity captive, and gave gifts to men; some apostles; some prophets; some evangelists; and some pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints for the work of the ministry for the edifying of the body of Christ; till we all come in the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God unto a perfect man, until the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ; that we henceforth be no more children tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; but speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things who is the head even Christ." The stability and progress of the church in the faith of the Gospel, is the great design of the Christian ministry; and experience has most abundantly shown its wise adaptation to the end. So engaged are most men in secular concerns, that without the influence of the Christian ministry and the stated administration of divine ordinances, they are in general neither disposed to attend to the truth as it is in Jesus, nor prepared to discern the fallacy of the diverse and strange doctrines by which the reception and proper influence of it are prevented. Hence, for the establishment and prevalence of the Christian faith among a people, no other means without this are at all effectual; and indeed the very existence and faithful application of other means are commonly dependent on this. Indi-

*An ordination.

vidual conversions there sometimes are where there is no Christian ministry, by means of the scriptures and other forms of evangelical truth; but where shall we find without it, a church built on the true foundation, continued from one generation to another, and rising with symmetry and strength as the dwelling place of God, and the medium of the rich and everlasting blessings which the Gospel is designed to convey?

2. This subject suggests the importance of *a stated and educated* Christian ministry. It is not difficult for a gifted and fervent mind to discourse to a plain people for a few months, in a way that will attract and interest them, and then give place for another to succeed him in a repetition of the same service; and great good, no doubt, is often done by such means; but to carry forward a people, from year to year, in the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ so that they shall be no more children tossed to and fro by every wind of doctrine, but men knowing and speaking the truth in love, and growing up together in all things into him who is the Head, this is a very different thing. Whoever aspires to this will not have been long in the work without understanding something of the meaning and sense of the apostle's interrogation, "Who is sufficient for these things?" Whatever may be his natural endowments, and spiritual gifts and graces, he will find the need of all the mental discipline and acquirements which a thorough education can give; and besides these, of the opportunity and the habit of giving himself to reading, to meditation, to prayer —of continuance in these with no entanglement in worldly affairs —of giving himself wholly to them, that his profiting may appear unto all. Such is the model of the Christian ministry, given us by the apostles of the Lord. After this model our puritan forefathers planted the Christian ministry in these New-England churches. And hence have come the fair fruits which, for more than two centuries, have blessed these churches and their many daughters here and throughout the land, and through them have blessed these favored civil states, and this benighted and miserable world. Much—much there is to be deplored in these churches; but in comparison with what may elsewhere be found in this imperfect state, have they not exhibited a character of intelligence, stability, unity, and liberal, self-denying, disinterested, beneficence, which has been an honor to their ministry? Who are carried about by the diverse and strange doctrines that from time to time sweep over the land? Who are the authors of these doctrines? Who gave their countenance to the propagation of them? Or who bring dishonor upon the Gospel by their scandalous lives tolerated under a Christian profession? Or who make no account of any profession of faith, or holy living, or Christian enterprise, out of

the pale of their particular denomination? Are they in general, I do not say members of these churches, though I might say this, but those who have been trained from their early years under an able and faithful ministry in these churches? And, on the other hand, who are main supporters of those literary, charitable and missionary institutions of our land, which have been formed and are so nobly carried forward, not for the exclusive advancement of a sect, but to bless our country and the world? I may seem to be a fool in this confidence of boasting, and yet I do but duly magnify my office, and plead for the best interests of men, when I point you to these fruits of a stated and educated ministry.

3. We are reminded by this subject of the great importance of sound doctrinal preaching. It is certainly incumbent on the ministers of the Gospel to "reprove, rebuke, exhort;" to show unto men their sins, and with all boldness call them to repentance and works meet for repentance. But to what purpose is it to call men to repentance without setting before them, in the light of truth, the occasion, the reasonableness, the obligation, the necessity of their repentance; that is, showing them the nature, authority and sanction of the divine law; in the light of this law, the nature, extent and guilt of their sin: and together with these, the sincerity fullness, freeness and adaptation to their necessities, of the offers of divine grace in the Gospel? To what purpose, to exhort them to love God, without presenting that truth by which his loveliness is seen and his claims are felt? Or to exhort them to grow in grace, without leading them on from step to step in that knowledge of God, in the view of whose glory alone it is possible that they should be changed after his image from glory to glory? He indeed discharges a needful office who comes and shows me what I must do, and tells me that I am a guilty, lost creature, if I refuse; but he who, at the same time, so brings before me the objects of faith—he who, through the Spirit, so takes of the things of Christ and shows them to me, that I am constrained to do it—he is the minister not of the law only, but of the Gospel—"not of the letter that killeth, but of the Spirit that giveth life." It was, I think, under this impression, that Paul describes the "good minister of Jesus Christ, "as one who is "nourished up in the words of faith and of sound doctrine"—one who, from his own knowledge of divine truth, and experience of its influences in sustaining and strengthening the life of God in the soul, is prepared as a good steward, to give to the household their portion in due season. It was under the same impression that with such awful solemnity he said to his son Timothy, "I charge thee before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who will judge the quick and dead, at his ap-

pearing and kingdom, preach the word; be instant in season, out of season, reprove rebuke, exhort, with all long-suffering and doctrine."

4. It is a grievious sin for members of the churches to forsake their pastors. My brethren, if you may not be carried about with diverse and strange doctrines, you may not go after those who preach such doctrines, nor permit your children to go after them, nor give them your countenance in their endeavors to draw others away. No motives of curiosity, no pretensions to candor and openness to conviction can justify this. These are indeed subjects on which, although you have your opinions, humanity and courtesy and even candor, would demand that you be willing to hear what may be said on the other side. But the leading doctrines of the Gospel are not of this nature. To profess to hold yourselves open to conviction on these, is to profess that you have need of being convinced. But with the Bible in your hands, and the profession of Christ on your lips, you are without excuse, if you are not already convinced—if you do not know assuredly what those doctrines are, and why you receive them as the true Gospel of the grace of God; and knowing this, you cannot, as you love God—as you love his truth and the souls of men, give countenance to one who preaches another Gospel. "Cease, my son," saith the voice of wisdom, "to hear the instruction that causeth to err from the words of knowledge."

Subjoined to the caution in my text, and explanatory of it is the charge—"Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves; for they watch for your souls as they that must give account." This charge is no less binding on the churches now than it orginally was on the church of the Hebrews. We do not indeed plead for an implicit submission, or even adherence to those who in the providence of God are set over you as your spiritual guides. This injunction of the apostle pre-supposes their guidance and instructions to be in accordance with the word of Him to whose teachings and authority alone, they and you owe an implicit submission. If they speak not according to this word, if they are ignorant or false, if they are blind leaders or incompetent, Paul surely does not command you to obey or cleave to them; but you are not therefore to go off to the standard of false doctrine. You may desire, and in an orderly way seek, an able and faithful ministration of the Gospel. I know not what you may seek if not this: but even though it be not immediately obtained, you may not therefore forsake the church which is "the house of the living God, the pillar and ground of truth." Your regard for the truth of God, and the stability and honor of your profession forbids it; and if for this cause, how much more for those infinitely slighter

causes, on account of which it is so often and so inconsiderately done.

My brethren of this church, you will not suppose that it is with any particular application to you, that I have been led to a consideration of this subject on the present occasion, further than as it is applicable to the churches generally at this day. Instability marks our country and age, and the causes of it are everywhere multiplied. On this account an able and faithful minister is the more highly to be prized; and we the more rejoice with you in the prospect now opened to you. The solemn bearing—the deep, the everlasting importance of the relation which these solemnities are designed to consummate, I need not explain to you. The choice of one to be to you a minister of Christ, and his consecration to the office—of one to be to you and your children the messenger of the Lord of Hosts, and to watch for your souls with reference to the day when you and he must stand before the judgment-seat of Christ to receive your sentence for eternity—of one to meet you from Sabbath to Sabbath in public assembly, there to lead your worship before the throne of God, and dispense to you the word of life, and by all the influence he can exert or call down upon you and your children, make it the single business of his life to form you and them for a glorious immortality; what single transaction is there in the progress of life which you or he will remember with deeper interest in the ages of eternity. In this transaction you will naturally suppose that he who now addresses you feels a peculiar interest. The feelings of a father towards him on whom your choice has fallen cannot but embrace those to whom he is to sustain so dear and sacred a relation; while the years that have fled away since once, in youthful days, I stood in this sacred place, before him who for nearly half a century had been your pastor, admonish me that I must soon have done with earthly things. Should he who is now to succeed to his place remain in it half that time, and be to you a faithful minister of Christ and should you receive him as such, and obey the word by him dispensed to you in the name of the Lord, and, after you and I and he shall have finished our course, should we all meet before the presence of Him who died for all, washed from our sins in his blood, then shall I give thanks to God that he gave me such a son, and made him such, and you, that he gave you such a minister, and bound you to him for Jesus' sake; and he more than we all, will give thanks for the grace conferred upon him in putting him into the ministry, and the mercy which he will have obtained of the Lord, through your prayers, to be faithful. Such a result, glorious beyond all our comprehension as it is, is not too glorious for the riches of divine grace to bestow, or our hearts to hope for. Be this then our united and unceasing aim, relying only, and relying con-

stantly and joyfully on him who said, "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Teaching them to observe all things, whatsoever I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world." Amen.

SERMON CCCXCV.

BY REV. GEORGE SHEPARD,

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THE GOSPEL WOE.

"Then began he to upbraid the cities where most of his mighty works were done, because they repented not: Woe unto thee Chorazin! woe unto thee Bethsaida! for if the mighty works which were done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes.—Matt. xi. 20. 21.

We have here the merciful and grieved Saviour pronouncing a woe. He pronounced it; he repeated it. How presumptuous and mistaken the speech of those who affirm, that the gospel has no woe. It has a woe, and it is upon those who have lived under the sound of it, beholding its wonders, listening to its invitations, but who have not repented and embraced it. Woe unto thee Chorazin! woe unto thee Bethsaida! for if the mighty works which were done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. "*They would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes.*" The woe, then, is in part for having let pass unimproved the proper season of repentance. If in your circumstances, Christ means to say in this passage, these old inhabitants of the world would have repented years ago—would have repented under some of the earlier calls and exhibitions of the Gospel. You have passed these and have not repented. The woe then is based in part upon the diminished probability of your repentance, as persons who have past the most fitting season of repentance.

Let us then here consider some of the grounds of peculiar exposure to the gospel woe, in the case of those who have long been under the gospel, without yielding to it. The fear is, the danger is, that they will die without repenting.

1. Because, first, they have witnessed, without saving conviction and effect, the peculiar and attesting works of the gospel. We refer now to those works which demonstrate this scheme of mercy to be the scheme and truth of God; to those things which are both evidence and motive. In the time of Christ and the apostles, they were chiefly miracles. To miracles the Saviour alludes in the text. "If the mighty works which were done in

you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes."

The works, which the Gospel performs now, though different, are equally convincing to the understanding and influential on the heart. They equally attest the presence, the power, the seal of God. Take the work of regeneration. It is not a miracle; but really as great a work as any miracle. This work is accomplished only by the power of God—it is performed upon, and before men. They see the process and the result; a neighbour arrested, cut down by the Spirit of God, and changed radically, and raised up to be henceforth a servant of God. Those who have been long in a christian community, where the word is preached, have witnessed many such instances of radical change and reformation; haters of God becoming lovers of his character and service; careless, worldly men, becoming earnest seekers of the divine favor and of an inheritance among the sanctified; the profane and wanton becoming persons of pure and prayerful lips and lives. Changes of this sort have been accomplished before the impenitent and unbelieving, which they knew at the time nothing else than the Gospel and power of God, ever did, or ever could effect in the character of man. They have occurred in the families of those still impenitent–one taken and another left; the husband has seen the wife transformed–the brother the sister; the parent the child. The subjects of this work have attested to those around them, solemnly and cogently, that it is a great change,—this work on the heart, a palpable and blessed work, an undoubted reality, the production of the Almighty Spirit. But those without, have not believed so as to seek the same great change for themselves. To such the language of the Apostle is applicable. Behold ye despisers and wonder and perish, for I work a work in your days which you shall in no wise believe though a man declare it unto you. These persons have the testimony of God, the author of the work; the testimony of men, the subjects of the work; and after all do not repent and believe, and become new creatures themselves.

Not only the gospel's power to change and reform men has been witnessed; but also its power of hope and consolation. It is sufficient to refer to its power of hope and consolation in death. Instances of this have occurred in the immediate circles of those, who, through continued impenitence, are daring a death of gloom, an eternity of despair. They have seen those dear to them, in calmness and joy, approaching the verge of life—fall without fear into the embrace of the king of terrors;—even desiring to leave the body and go into the dread future: They have seen all this, and known the cause: The truth in Jesus had done its work upon those so departing: They were new creatures in Christ Jesus. Hence they showed forth the peace and power of their hope. The witnesses of the scene (and have you not all witnessed some such

scene) received an argument, absolutely conclusive, of the stability and power of the christian hope. You knew then, you do know now, that this reforming, all sustaining gospel is the blessed authoritative Gospel of God; especially when you saw the dreadful opposite of the scene above described, that man dying in his sins: perhaps he died in stupidity. Perhaps not; if not, you understand the difference between dying, as this hope helps us, in calmness and joy and dying in the horror and despair of unforgiven sin.

All these things have been arguments and motives, enforcing the claims of Christ, and adapted to bring to repentance those who have lived in the midst of these privileges. The withstanding them increases the danger that such will die without repenting.

2. But I remark again, that the gospel has probably made a nearer approach. Most of those who have lived for some time under its teaching and appeals, have been the subjects of some special influence. The truth has been made real and vivid upon their minds by the Holy Spirit. They felt that they were sinners; they believed fully for a season in the necessity of being born again. They resolved, as they thought, to seek an interest in Christ whom they perceived to be near and ready to save them. They were almost persuaded, brought almost to the point of submission, but they grew tired of this anxious attitude, this spiritual striving, or some temptation came in, and they shook off their seriousness, meaning to repent at some more favorable time. I believe that almost all in christian communities have had experiences of this sort; even those who are now the most completely under the power of sin. We have arrived then at this point. The gospel has tried upon such, its most solemn and efficacious truths, and its special influences. They have seen its most remarkable works, have felt its most urgent motives, and been bowed beneath its convicting spirit; and all, without a change of heart and life; and how does the danger increase, the probability grow, that they will die without repenting!

3. There is another step in our argument. The gospel has all the while been losing its novelty and freshness; and with these, has lost much of its power, relatively, to seize the attention and interest the mind. By stated, frequent, repetitions through successive years, it gets stale to men destitute of religious affections and sympathies. They seem to care but little about it—appear vacant, indifferent, when under its strains of mercy—will even sleep quietly in their pews, beneath its richest proffers and most startling appeals. It is, indeed, one of the most difficult parts of a minister's work, to get a tolerably decent exterior attention, when he stands up in the hallowed place, a messenger, bearing from God his great and free mercy, to his needy, dying, fellow men. Whilst angels in heaven are

attracted to these things, men on earth, immensely interested, for whom the whole provision is made; who are either to be saved by it or more deeply damned, hear it often, almost without hearing it at all: mainly because they have heard it a thousand times before, and expect to hear it a thousand times to come—the same old strains again, the same old truths, the same old story. It is prominently from this very oldness and staleness, the thread-worn nature of the theme, that the indifference comes. I ask the impatient man seriously to consider, in his place before God to-day, if he be not in growing danger of a deepened perdition, from the long line and dense profusion of his privileges; from the very frequency and urgency with which salvation has been proffered to, and crowded upon him.

4. There is yet another step in our argument. While the gospel is thus relatively enfeebled, enfeebled as we have seen from repetition and commonness, the power on the part of those who have been hearing it without compliance, their power to resist and put it aside, has been steady and fearfully increasing. Their own hearts have become filled with reasons and pretences for setting it aside. Many of those reasons and pretences are gathered from without. It is admitted, while there are sufficient arguments and motives in the scenes of life to establish and enforce the claims of the gospel, there are also facts and occurrences which are turned against the gospel; which impenitent men employ to delay their submission to the authority, and their acceptance of the provision of the gospel. I will instance one class which possesses great potency in making out the perdition of ungodly men. Where the gospel has been preached for a long time, there grows up in connection with it, a mass of bad characters. There are many unsound conversions, the subjects of them often come into the church, they remain there cold hearted, selfish, worldly professors. Some of them stand before the community as immoral professors. There are apostacies, praying men, who turn back to be profane men. We see them with the serious, after a little while, we see them with the thoughtless, the pleasure seeking. There are religious animosities and quarrels. They sweep through and scathe families, sometimes whole communities; and religion lies dishonored and bleeding. Men without look on and try to suppose that these things are the legitimate offspring of religion then they feel excused, at least relieved, in their neglect of religion. These things exist, they have been, they are, and will be, effectual inducements to adventuring upon a yet longer impenitence. But, O the hazard, the wrong, that is done to the great Saviour. Whoever attributes, in his most secret thoughts, any impropriety of conduct in a christian or any other being to the religion of the gospel, let him know, that he is guilty of an offence against the Lord Jesus Christ, which he will find it hard to answer for, when arraigned at the bar of this same enthroned and Almighty King.

But so it is, that men are helped forward in the way to death, by charging falsely the benignant scheme put forth to save them. There grows up, and matures within men, a state more and more adverse to the Gospel. The disregard—the putting off—the rejection, becomes a habit. This habit is another name for an exceedingly hardened heart.

Look at that man growing old in impenitence. The truth, which affected him when a youth, does not affect him now. The discourse which then made him serious, and even to tremble in view of his sins, and in the prospect of eternity, hardly moves him at all now. Why? the truth is the same; eternity the same; heaven, hell the same; the same to die in sin and go unpardoned to the judgment. He is different. While his case is more urgent, his mind is more steadfastly at ease. He has stifled conviction, quelled anxiety, allayed fear, so often, and so long, that it is done now without difficulty—done as a mere matter of course.

Thus, in him and in others who have for some time been hearing Christ's warnings and overtures to disregard them, there is a greatly augmented skill in warding off the strokes of truth, healing the wounds it makes, and stilling the tumult it raises, in the unquiet conscience. In proportion as this strength of resistance has grown, the power of truth has become relatively diminished. Its best, its living arguments and appeals, have been successfully met and silenced; and as these have been put down, there have been brought up another list of facts and arguments, gathered from all apostate quarters—considerations against repentance from the errors of a spurious repentance, these are seized upon, spread out, and put as sovereign plasters, on sore consciences, till the incisions of truth are healed, and the man, once of many pangs and fears, stands up with a whole heart and a high front, against the dread Being with whom he is contending—the worm moves, cooly on to encounter the wrath of the Almighty God.

This process we have now followed, and the accompanying facts and considerations, exhibit the ground and the greatness of the danger, that those who have been long favored with the Gospel, to no saving purpose, will die without repenting. Had these things been done in Tyre and Sidon, this divine and free mercy been offered to Sodom and Gomorrah they would long ere this have repented in sackcloth and ashes. The apprehension then is, the probability, the ground of alarm is that the proper time for repenting is getting past with many of you. This is one of the grounds of the woe.

Woe—Not unto you, ye inhabitants of Tyre and Sidon.

Woe—Not unto you, ye inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah.

But as our Saviour pronounced it, and if here would probably pronounce it again—Woe unto you ye favored ones, ye prisoners of hope—ye dwellers amid an abounding and preferred salvation: not on account of those proffers and privileges: they might long ere this have been the occasion of untold, infinite, treasures of hope and joy to your deathless spirit; but because you have slighted them, have withheld belief before the most perfect and searching arguments; refused repentance and submission in the most tender and subduing scenes: and in the doing of this, have required a rugged sternness of spirit, a refractory hardness of character, and iron insensibility of feeling, a fixed habit of rejection and disobedience, which portend sadly for the future.

Alas, for any, if the probability should become a certainty–and they should die as they have thus far lived–without repentance, or the least preparation to meet their Maker. They would pass from time to meet the gospel woe in eternity; and a dreadful woe it will be. We can here have but the faintest conception, as compared with the wasting reality. Still we can conceive enough, to make us shudder at the prospect, and tremble for those who are exposed to it, and who seem to have no concern to get out of the way of it.

It will be a woe—a punishment, based on guilt, on the palpable ill-deservings of the lost soul. The suffering will be proportionate to the guilt. Let us then just glance, calmly and soberly, at this—the amount of guilt treasured up by the individual who has passed a life under the gospel, and ended that life without repenting, and obeying it. Through all that life he has been transgressing the pure, spiritual, law of God—which required him to love his Maker supremely, and his fellow-being as himself. This is one part of the sum.

Another and greater, perhaps, grows out of his sins against the gospel. What arguments, what evidence shining down from heaven, has he gone against. What reasonings and strivings of the Spirit, sent to persuade and enable him to be a good man, has he disregarded and overborne. What manifold tender invitations from the Great King to the feast, prepared for needy souls, has he set disrespectfully aside. What revealings of wrath, has he fronted and braved in his worldly career. What love has he shut out from his heart. The love of God, in giving his Son—the love of Christ in giving himself—astounding, unparalleled love; the report of which probably, turned up to behold, from their bed in hell, the wondering eyes of the damned, and brought down we know, from above the fixed gaze of angels, eager to fathom if they could this mystery of love. The report of it reached him, he understood it was for him; his Creator, living on earth, dying on the cross for his sins, he knew it—but he rejected it. The whole, immense cost, he disregarded. If it had been but for once, we could not have estimated the indignity to the authority, the injury to the heart of

God. Instead of once it was done times past number—done through life–coolly done as the settled habit and business of life. His whole earthly course, from the cradle to the coffin, was taken right under the meridian blaze of this sun—right under the intense, melting, action of this love; and what should have melted him, what *did* melt others by his side, only hardened him, reared up and fostered a giant depravity, gathered and piled over his head an immense woe, which if it comes upon him, will weigh him down to the very lowest hell.

But I cannot proceed. The view, the little glimpse we can get here of the gospel woe, is too dreadful to dwell upon. We shrink, shuddering from the prospect. We shudder to know, that so many about us are exposed to it; are even making it probable, by their prolonged impenitence, that the bitter wailings under this more than mountain pressure will be their eternal portion.

We say not these things because we love to say them; but because we are constrained to say them; we feel that it would be unkind not to warn you; and while our lips speak these things, our hearts are saying, oh! that you would be persuaded to escape from beneath, and by your prompt and deep repentings, turn this great gospel woe, into the precious gospel blessing.

There are a number of solemn considerations clustering about this subject, which I should like to dwell upon, but I can only name two or three.

1. One is, that the most wicked man outwardly is not of course the most guilty man. As our Saviour has settled this point, let us accept the truth from his lips. The Sodomites we know were wicked perhaps beyond all parallel in human history. Yet the Saviour said to a comparatively moral community, rejecting the gospel, and he says the same here—It shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment than for you. Let it not be forgotten that under the fairest exterior, there often lurks a heart of the most rocky hardness and the intensest enmity.

2. Again. We see a reason for the fact that the very moral are frequently the farthest from the kingdom of heaven. It was so in Christ's day; and he said most plainly to a class of this sort, very moral, priding themselves in their morality, externally religious: Publicans and harlots go into the kingdom of God before you; they repented at the preaching of John; you are unmoved, impenitent under the preaching, and in view of the works of the Son of God himself. Men now sit under the gospel; they conform externally; the truth lops off the excrescences of the character; but while it is doing this exterior work, through their resistance to its spirit–its claims upon their hearts; they make obdurate their hearts then in order to silence conscience, and keep down fear as they

look at the gospel woe; they try to make a religion of their morality: they in a measure succeed; they do make a religion of their morality. They refuse to strive for a better religion. They consent to adventure their souls on this rotten bottom; they dare to go forward, and finally up with this wretched plea, to the judgment of their Maker.

Finally. We see the dependence of men who have resisted means and influences which would have brought others to repentance—we see the peculiar, entire, dependence of such upon the sovereign grace of God. Wherever else we look, it is utter blackness—not a gleam of hope in their case. Here we behold a power adequate, if only put forth, to renovate and redeem those who have held out against all previous means.

Christians—Will you pray to God and beseech him, as you have not done before, to put forth that redeeming and subduing energy—to pour out the fulness of that wonder working Spirit. If there come not down from above a more decisive power, then those who have thus far gone against God's array of mercy, will go on still, and will go through life unreached, uninterested.

And can you, you my friends? I speak to those who have had a long time and many precious seasons for repentance, but who have not yet repented. Is it well thus to let the best part of life go by, without any vigorous effort upon the one great business of life? Is it generous to disregard such love as he has moved for you, and moved toward you in God's scheme of redemption. Is it prudent to run such tremendous risk, as according to the gospel of God, you are this day running, while you put off this great concern? Will it be tolerable to you in that eternity to which you are hastening, to go down in hell below the profligates of Sodom, and make your eternal bed amid the fiercest of those burnings? We may all lay this to heart. Can we bear it? Can our friends bear it? How much better to turn to Christ, and live in heaven.

THE LAST JUDGMENT.

We *have* seen Jesus at the bar of Pilate. We *shall* see Pilate at the bar of Jesus.

Every man has a case pending in the court of eternal judgment, in which property is concerned, even his right to the tree of life, and his title to the inheritance that fadeth not away; and liberty is involved, the freedom of the soul from the most cruel tyranny that ever oppressed and degraded man; and life is at stake, not this life only, which if it be not violently cut off, soon terminates of itself, but a life to which this is not as the minutest dew-drop to the shoreless and unfathomable ocean. If this case be decided against you, you forfeit that right and title to heaven, you lose the freedom of the soul, and you entail upon your immortality a curse, which causes it to have all the evils of death, and to be called death, while it has none of its immunities. And the day of trial is approaching. You have already been summoned to be in readiness, for you know not the hour when you will be called to trial. Are you prepared for trial? Have you secured the advocacy of him who alone can successfully manage your cause?

How intensely interesting and awful a day will that of the judgment be! It would seem as if Christ was always thinking of it. How frequently he speaks of it, and never but with the deepest solemnity.

It is the judgment-seat of CHRIST before which we are to appear. 'The Father judgeth no man, but has committed all judgment to the Son.' Christian, what a subject thou hast here for thy heart's most fond meditation—thy Saviour thine arbiter—thy advocate and thy judge the same. What client would not be willing that his own counsel should decide his case! Dost thou tremble at the thought of going to judgment? Why, it is but to go to Christ—to Him who has already taken thy burden and given thee rest. Once He has already accepted thee. Will He change his mind and reject thee? Will he not honor his own righteousness, which he put on thee? Shall not his pleadings for thee prevail, when he pleads, as it were, with himself—and his intercessions on thy behalf are made to his own heart, that sorrowed for thee, and to his own bosom, that bled for thee? 'Who is he that condemneth? Is it Christ that died, yea, rather that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession

for us?' Impossible! And yet, if He does not condemn, who can, since He is the judge? This arrangement, by which the sinner's Saviour is his judge, constitutes one among the many surpassing beauties of Christianity. I wonder that the mere man of taste is not struck with it. Child of God, follower of the Lamb, press the thought to thy heart, cherish it among thy richest recollections. So shalt thou have 'boldness in the day of judgment.'

How much more our actions mean, than we suppose they do. The wicked, until the judgment day, will not know, that in refusing acts of kindness to the pious poor, they were refusing to feed and clothe Christ. They thought it was but some poor, weak people, called Christians, who made much ado about religion, that they had thus neglected. They did not mean any direct affront to Christ, but so he takes it. 'I am Jesus, whom thou persecutest,' said the voice from heaven to the astonished Saul of Tarsus.

The doctrine of an adjusting judgment, if it have any place in the system of natural religion, is inferred from the Divine justice, and cannot, therefore, be adduced in proof of it. That were to reason in a circle.

At the last judgment, a day of insufferable splendor will dawn upon us; a scene of tremendous magnificence will be displayed before these eyes, and these ears will hear that trumpet's stunning thunder. And you and I, who are now before a mercy-seat, will encompass a judgment-seat.

There is one controversy which the last day shall forever determine—the long and unhappy controversy about the Divinity of Jesus. *How* it shall be decided I leave you to judge, after I shall have asked a few questions. If the mover of all those sublime scenes, the agent in all those grand transactions be not God, where is God? and why takes he no part in the doings of this last tremendous day? If Omnipotence be not in this work of general desolation, where is Omnipotence slumbering? Where is the work that befits Omnipotence? If a mere creature is sitting on the throne of the Universe, where sits Jehovah? Tell me, Reason, and why and where has he retired, when now the destiny of men and angels is determining? If it be not Omniscience on that throne, if not Omniscience, which, from the lost archangel down to the least human sinner, scans every life, searches every spirit, and scrutinizes the inmost thoughts and the deepest purposes, what has Omniscience to do? I had thought it was Deity, at whose stepping forth the everlasting mountains are scattered, and the perpetual hills do bow—Deity, from whose face the heaven and the earth do flee away—Deity, that keeps the keys of death and of hell—Deity, who sits on the throne of the universe—Deity, at whose hands I am to receive the eternal recompense.

NEVINS.

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SERMON CCCXCVI.

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THE DEATH OF A MOTHER.*

"I bowed down heavily, as one that mourneth for his mother."—Psalm xxxv. 14

There is a peculiarity in every kind of bereavement. There is enough to separate it from all other modes of trial, to produce a peculiar state of feeling, and to convey its own lessons to the soul distinct from those imparted by any other divine dispensation. The loss of a wife, a friend, a companion, a sympathiser in trials, a fellow-heir of the grace of life, a sharer of the joys and a divider of the sorrows of our pilgrimage; of a son who we hoped would be our stay and staff in old age, and perpetuate our name when we are dead; of a daughter whom we have tenderly nourished and tenderly loved; of a sister, the companion of the playful days of childhood, and a kind friend as she advanced with us to the maturity of life; of a father, the counsellor and guide of our youth—each one of these bereavements has its own sad lesson to convey to the soul; each one touches a cord in the heart which vibrates only then. It is a part of our duty and dicipline here carefully to gather up these lessons and apply them to our own souls.

In the text it is supposed that the death of a mother effects those who

* Note.—Occasioned by the recent death of the author's mother.—*Editor.*

are bereaved by her loss in a peculiar manner, and that such a loss is among the heaviest of sorrows. "I bowed down heavily, as one that mourneth for his mother." To see the force of this text it is not necessary to suppose that this is the heaviest of all the sorrows which we can experience, nor is it necessary to make any comparison between this and the other forms of bereavement which we may be called to endure. All that is necessary to say is, that there are cords of the soul touched then which have not been touched before, and which will not be again. A man has but one mother to love; and when such an event occurs, it is well for him to endeavor to learn the lessons which God once in his life designs to teach him.

It is the duty of a minister of the gospel to adapt his teaching to all the relations of life, and to apply the lessons of religion to the various circumstances in which his hearers may be placed. At no one time indeed can it be supposed that any considerable part of his audience will feel an immediate interest in a topic of this kind; but there are usually enough who have been recently afflicted in this manner to make such a topic of public discourse proper. Besides, how large a portion in a congregation is there who have at some time been thus bereaved! How many are there here to-day who at some period of their lives have known what it was to lose a mother! It will be no injury to recall the memory of that scene—not for the purpose of opening wounds again which time and religion may have healed—but to make more fresh in the recollection the lessons which God designed to convey by the living virtues, and by the death of a mother. It may be useful, too, to those who have mothers from whom they may soon be called to part, to contemplate this relation, and to be told of the kind of emotions which spring up in the soul when a parent is taken away to be seen no more. It may teach you to prize their counsels and their friendship more; it may make you more careful not to pain their hearts by unkindness or disobedience.

I shall make no comparison between this relation and that of a father. *That* is in many respects as important and as influential as this; and when that is sundered, the bereavement as much demands the tribute of our tears, and conveys as important lessons to the soul. Perhaps in some cases there may be more to affect the heart in such a loss, for some of us may owe more to the inherited mental characteristics, and the example and the direct teaching of a father, than we do to a mother. But though this may be so, the remarks which I propose to submit to you now, will, I trust, be seen to be founded in truth. Without any very exact order, yet with such a general distribution of my thoughts as will be adapted, I hope, to make a distinct impression on the mind, I shall submit to you a few reflections on such a relation, and such a loss, which I trust may be fitted to be useful.

I. I need hardly say that the relation of a mother is a peculiar relation, and has features which are found in no other. The tie is one which exists nowhere else; which can never be renewed; which, when it is

sundered, is sundered forever, unless it is cemented by religion, and grows up into eternal affection in the heavens.

Her affection for us began at a period of which we have no recollection, and when we were not conscious that any being loved us. It was laid far back in her nature, by a benignant Providence, to anticipate our helplessness and our wants as we came into the world. It began when as yet we had manifested no qualities of mind or heart to deserve affection; when we were incapable of returning the tokens of her love; when we could not give back the kiss that was tenderly impressed upon us, and when it was certain that the expressions of her lavished affection could not be remembered by us should we ever reach a period when we would be capable of repaying appreciated kindness. It existed in her heart whatever we were to be, or whatever was to be our fortune in this world, and was so strong that even could she have foreseen all our ingratitude, and all that we might yet do to pain her, she would still have loved us, and perhaps her caresses would have been only the more tender while we were yet innocent, and our souls were uncontaminated by contact with evil. She met us as we entered on life already prepared to do us good. Her first emotion toward us was that of love; and even then, when we had no character, and no claim for services rendered; when we had furnished no evidence that we ever would be worthy of her love, or repay her kindness with anything but ingratitude, she was ready to do for us what we may have even now scarcely secured a friend to do by all our virtues. Not a friend have we now who would watch more patiently by our sick-bed than she would have done by our cradle then, nor have we one who would sorrow more sincerely over our grave. This care we owed primarily to God, and under him to that affection which he had created in her heart.

Unnumbered comforts on my soul,
Thy tender care bestowed,
Before my infant heart conceived
From whom those comforts flowed.

The affection thus laid in her heart to anticipate our necessities, was strengthed on her part by all her own toil, and care, and watchfulness, and sacrifices on our behalf. Whatever might be the effect on us, the effect on her was to make her love us more. Her own solicitude and toil became thus a measure of her augmented affection; for God has instructed us to love that much which is the fruit of sacrifice and toil. Her love for us was measured far more by her own sacrifices than by our own worth, or by any developed traits of character which seemed to justify her ardor of affection, though it was also strengthened on her part by every thing in us—then estimated perhaps at more than twice its value—which seemed to reward her care. On our part the attachment formed is not that which grows out of favors rendered, but favors received. It is laid indeed in nature; but it grows up and expands because we receive so many benefits; because there is such an obligation of gratitude; because

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we learn more and more, as we advance in years, how much we owe to a mother.

The attachment for a mother is different from that which we have for a brother or sister. That may be exceedingly tender and pure. Indeed, there is nothing more pure in our relations than love for a sister. But it is formed in a different way. When the tie which binds us to her is severed, it cannot indeed be renewed; it makes a sad desolation in the soul; but it is not precisely the sorrow which we have when we "bow down heavily, mourning for a mother." We love a sister, for we began life together, under the same roof, under the fostering care of the same parents. We played together in childhood; we shared the same gentle amusements; we went to the same school; we had the same father to counsel and guide us; and had the same mother to teach us to pray, and to give us the parting kiss at night. We grew up equally beloved by our parents, and we have learned to love each other much by mutual acts of affection and kindness.

The attachment is different from those friendships which we form as we advance in life. Those may be dear, and they may be stronger than that which binds to a mother, but they are not the same. A man leaves father and mother and cleaves to his wife with an affection more tender and strong than that formed by any natural relation, but it is not the same. He forms strong friendships in life, like that which bound the heart of David and Jonathan, but such friendships did not begin as we entered on life, nor imbed themselves in the soft heart of infancy and childhood, nor are they cemented by so many acts of kindness.

The attachment to a mother is different from that which we form for our children. It is what we expect of them, rather than what we feel for them. We love them much—even as she did us. But it is a love for them as our children; as dependent on us; as helpless; as needing our care and counsel; as a part of ourselves; as those who we hope will do us honor when we are dead. These attachments which we form in after life, of nature and affection, are strong and tender; they may be more immediately tender than those which we bear for a parent; grief may be more poignant when they are sundered by death, and when we follow wife or child to the grave, but it has its own features, distinct from that when a venerable and much loved parent is conveyed to the tomb. As there was a peculiarity of attachment, so there will be a peculiarity of sorrow such as we are not to experience again.

II. I notice a second peculiarity of feature in this kind of bereavement. It is in the change which is produced in our ideas of home—the home of our childhood and youth. When she lived there, there was always a home—a place which in every situation of life we felt was such, and which we regarded as such.

In our childhood and youth, there was in that home where she was, one who always cared for us, and for all that appertained to us. There was one who we were sure would take an interest in everything that we took

an interest in, and whose ear we were certain would be open to listen to all our tales of childish success, or of childish trouble. We were sure that she would take the same interest in it which we did, and we expected confidently that whoever might be against us, she would be for us. We never had a doubt that she would listen to our tale of fright, of disappointment, of calamity ; nor that she would feel just as we did about it. The matter might be in itself important, or unimportant; it might be dignified or undignified, yet we never doubted that she would regard it as important, and as sufficiently momentous to claim her attention. We might have felt that it was not grave enough to tell a father about ; we might have doubted whether he would suspend his more weighty employments to interest himself in our affairs ; but we never had such a doubt for a moment about a mother. No matter what her employments, or her cares, or what she might be interested in, we were sure that she would be interested in us, and that, in all our troubles, we should find her our friend. We had our difficulties in the little world of childhood. Bigger and older boys struck us, or laughed at us, or reviled us, or surpassed us in learning, in running, or in skill, and in that little world we might have found no sympathy, and there was no one there to whom we could unburden an aching heart. But we were sure that there was one who would sympathise with us, and who would be on our side. Our playmates derided us, and laughed at us because we said, in our simplicity, that we "would tell our mother." And yet it was philosophy deep and pure to do so—like the pure crystal spring that breaks out of the side of a hill in the uncultivated forest. It was what nature prompted to—for nature designed that she should know our troubles, and nature had formed for us such a friend there, that whoever was against us, we knew that she would be on our side ; whoever wronged us, she would not; whoever exulted over us, she would not join in the exultation. You may say that this is childish philosophy. So it may be ; and the nearer our philosophy comes back to simple nature as developed there, the nearer we shall be to truth. In our troubles we have always needed a friend who would sympathise with us, and to whom we might unburden all the sorrows of the soul. The disciples of John's Redeemer "came, and took up his murdered body, and buried it, and went and told Jesus." Math. xiv. 12. In him they had a friend—tender and delicate above all a mother's feelings —who they were sure would sympathise with their sorrows ; and what was more natural than that they should go and tell him ? So in the home of our childhood, it was dear to us as a home, for there was not a sorrow of our heart that we might not tell our mother.

Many of us—most of us who are advanced beyond the period of childhood—went out from that home to embark on the stormy sea of life. Of the feelings of a father, and of his interest in our welfare, we have never entertained a doubt, and our home was dear because he was there ; but there was a peculiarity in the feeling that it was the home of our mother. While she lived there, there was a place that we felt was home. There was one place where we would always be welcome ; one place where we

would be met with a smile; one place where would be sure of a friend. The world might be indifferent to us. We might be unsuccessful in our studies or our business. The new friends which we supposed we had made, might prove to be false. The honor which we thought we deserved, might be withheld from us. We might be chagrined and mortified by seeing a rival outstrip us, and bear away the prize which we sought; but there was a place where no feelings of rivalry were found, and where those whom the world overlooked would be sure of a friendly greeting. Whether pale and wan by study, care, or sickness; or flushed with health and flattering success, we were sure that we should be welcome there. Though the world was cold towards us, yet there was one who always rejoiced in our success, and always was affected in our reverses—and there was a place to which we might go back from the storm which began to pelt us, where we might rest, and become encouraged and invigorated for a new conflict. So have I seen a bird in its first efforts to fly, leave its nest, and stretch its wings and go forth to the wide world. But the wind blew it back, and the rain began to fall, and the darkness of night began to draw on, and there was no shelter abroad, and it sought its way back to its nest, to take shelter beneath its mother's wings, and to be refreshed for the struggles of a new day; but then it flew away to think of its nest and its mother no more. But not thus did we leave our home when we bade adieu to it to go forth alone to the manly duties of life. Even amidst the storms that then beat upon us, and the disappointments that we met with, and the coldness of the world, we felt still that there was one there who sympathised in our troubles as well as rejoiced in our success, and that, whatever might be abroad, when we entered the door of her dwelling, we should be met with a smile. We expected that a mother, like the mother of Sisera, as she "looked out at her window" waiting for the coming of her son laden with the spoils of victory, would look out for our coming, and that our return would renew her joy and ours in our earlier days.

"Oh! in our sterner manhood, when no ray
Of earlier sunshine glimmers on our way;
When girt with sin, and sorrow, and the toil
Of cares, which tear the bosom that they soil;
Oh! if there be in retrospection's chain
One link that knits us with young dreams again,
One thought so sweet, we sacrcely dare to muse,
On all the hoarded raptures it reviews,
Which seems each instant, in its backward range,
The heart to soften, and its ties to change,
And every spring untouched for years, to move,
It is—THE MEMORY OF A MOTHER'S LOVE!"

It makes a sad desolation when from such a place a mother is taken away—and when, whatever may be the sorrows or the successes in life, she is to greet the returning son or daughter no more. The home of our childhood may be still lovely. The old family mansion; the green fields; the running stream; the moss-covered well; the trees; the lawn; the rose; the sweet-briar, may be there. Perchance, too, there may be an

aged father, with venerable locks, sittiug in his loneliness, with everything to command respect and love, but she is not there. Her familiar voice is not heard. The mother has been borne forth to sleep by the side of her children who went before her, and the place is not what it was. There may be those whom we much love, but she is not there. We may have formed new relations in life—tender and strong as they can be; we may have another home dear to us as was the home of our childhood, where there is all in affection, kindness and religion to make us happy, but that home is not what it was, and it will never be what it was again. It is loosening of one of the cords which bound us to earth—designed to prepare us for our eternal flight from everything dear here below, and to teach us that there is no place here that is to be our permanent home.

III. I notice a third thing in such an event which is found to convey a lesson to the soul such as we always feel in bereavement, but which, like the other things adverted to, has a peculiarity of its own. I refer to a class of emotions often not less painful, and of a much more admonitory character than those which I have adverted to, and which, such are our imperfections in all the relations of life, we are always destined to feel when a friend is removed by death. I mean the quickened recollection of our neglects, of our acts of unkindness, of our ingratitude, of our improper feelings in our intercourse with those whom we have lost.

What I now advert to is one of the most beautiful and benignant laws of our nature—one of the most delicate arrangements to bring our guilt to remembrance in order that we may exercise true repentance, and to prompt us to kindness and fidelity in the remaining relations of life.

This law of our nature, which cannot well be explained except on the supposition that there is a moral government, and that God designs that all our sins shall be brought to our remembrance, is this—that in the death of a friend we instinctively recall the wrongs that we may have done him; for some mysterious power seems to summon them up from the land of forgetfulness, and to cause them to pass in solemn procession before us. Things which we had forgotten; words which we long since uttered but which had passed from the memory; expressions of irritated feeling; unjust suspicions; jealousies; neglect of the respect or the courtesies due in that relation of life; a want of attention when the heart of the friend was sad; want of sympathy in his successes or reverses, all seem to revive as we stand around the open grave, and as the coffin of the friend descends there, they are quickened into life—as the dead man was by the bones of Elisha. How this is so, as a matter of moral administration, we may not be able to explain. Perhaps it is because, though conscious in the general that we had erred in that relation, we still hoped that the friend would somehow forgive us—but now he has gone to the grave, and now we can never ask him to pardon us. Perhaps it is that we look on him now as a sufferer—and pity his condition—and all his sources of sorrow seem summoned to aggravate his condition, and among others the wrongs that we have done arise to our view as a bitter in-

gredient in his cup of woes. Perhaps it is that God meant so to make the conscience that it would not always slumber, and designed that once at least it should do its appropriate work.

This law of our natnre has been so beautifully described by one of our best American writers, that I can do nothing so well as to copy his words:—"Oh the grave! the grave! It buries every error, covers every defect, extinguishes every resentment. From this peaceful bosom spring none but fond regrets and tender recollections. Who can look down even upon the grave of an enemy, and not feel a compunctious throb that he ever should have warred with the poor handful of earth that lies mouldering before him? But the grave of those we loved—what a place for meditation! There it is that we call up in long review the whole history of the truth and gentleness, and the thousand endearments lavished upon us, almost unheard in the daily course of intimacy; there it is we dwell upon the tenderness of the parting scene, the bed of death with all its stifled grief, its noiseless attendants, its most watchful assiduities—the last testimonies of expiring love, the feeble, fluttering, thrilling—oh how thrilling is the fluttering pulse—the last fond look of the glazing eye, turning upon us from the threshold of existence; the faint, faltering accent, struggling in death, to give one more assurance of affection. Oh, go to the grave of buried love, and there meditate. There settle the account with thy conscience of every past endearment unregarded of that departed being who never, never can be soothed by contrition. If thou art a child, and hast ever added a sorrow to the soul, or a furrow to the silvered brow of an affectionate parent—if thou art a husband, and hast ever caused the fond bosom that ventured its whole happiness in thy arms to doubt one moment of thy kindness or thy truth—or if thou art a friend, and hast injured by thought, by word, or deed, the spirit that generously confided in thee—if thou art a lover, and hast ever given one unmerited pang to the true heart that now lies cold beneath thy feet, then be sure that every unkind look, every ungracious word, every ungentle action will come thronging back upon thy memory, and knock dolefully at thy soul; be sure that thou wilt lie down sorrowing and repenting on the grave, and utter the unheard groan, and pour the unavailing tear, bitter because unheard and unavailing."

Who, I may add, ever saw an endeared friend die, and did not feel that there were things in his intercourse with him to regret, and for which he would now desire to ask forgiveness? Who ever saw a man die of whom he had said hard things, or thought hard things, who did not lament that he had given indulgence to such words and feelings? Who ever attended one to the grave—friend or foe, partner or rival, with whom he had been at variance, who did not now wish to have it all buried in oblivion? Who can carry his enmity to the grave? There, when a rival or a foe is laid "earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust," we lay our animosities aside. There we feel, that whatever may be true of him whom we commit to the tomb, there was much in us that was wrong. And there we regret every unkind word, feel pained at the remembrance of every un-

kind thought, and mourn that we have done no more to impart happiness to the cold sleeper whom we are to see no more.

I said that this was a beautiful and benignant law of our nature, and though attended like other laws when violated, with pain, the design is as apparent as it is beautiful. It has two objects as a part of the divine moral administration. One is to lead us to repentance for our errors and faults, that we may obtain pardon of our God before it be too late. True, the sleeper there cannot now utter the word of forgiveness. Those lips are for ever sealed in death—and how much would we give now could we ask that friend to forgive us! How much would we rejoice could we have the assurance from those lips that the faults that now come thronging on our memory were forgiven and forgotten, and that they did not add a pang to his last sorrows. But if we cannot now confess the fault in the ear of that friend; if we cannot now hope that those lips will open to declare us forgiven, we may confess the fault to God, and may be assured that he will blot the remembrance of it from his book. Around each grave of a friend, therefore, he summons up groups of our past offences that we may be humbled and penitent, and may not go unpardoned to eternity. The other design of this benignant law is, to keep us from offending hereafter; to teach us to manifest kindness in the remaining relations of life. True, we cannot again injure, or offend, or pain the sleeper there. Whatever may be his condition now, he is where our unkindness or neglect will not reach or affect him. But we have other relations in life, perhaps equally tender and equally important. There are other hearts that may be made to bleed by ingratitude, or coldness, or neglect, or mercy, and we may be assured that what has happened in the case of the friend that we have now lost, will happen also in theirs. The design of the law is, to teach us to indulge no thought, to speak no word, to evince no feeling which we would regret when they too are removed. And what a restraint would this be on our temper, our words, our whole deportment!

In each bereavement there is a peculiar group of these painful thoughts that come thronging to the recollection. They are those which are revived by that bereavement, but would be unaffected by any other. How many such things there are laid away in the chambers of the soul, now slumbering there like torpid adders, perhaps hereafter to be quickened into life to be our tormenters! The occasion requires me only to allude to that class of emotions which is thus summoned to our recollection on the death of a mother. And who is there of us that can see a mother die without many such painful and disquieting thoughts—greatly embittering the natural grief of parting? Even while we were conscious of having had for her strong and tender love; even when in the main we desired to respect her and to make her happy; even when we know that our general character has been approved by her, and that in life thus far we have not disappointed her fond anticipations, yet how many times in childhood have we been disobedient, how often have we spoken disrespectfully, how often have we disregarded her wishes, how often have we ut-

tered sentiments peevishly that we knew differed from hers; how often have we failed in rendering that prompt and ready obedience which was due to her as a mother, and to her kindness to us; how many times by our perverseness, our self-will, our pride, our obstinacy, have we discouraged her in her efforts to do us good; how often have we done that which would weary out the patience of any one put a parent—and God. Could we hear her speak again, how many things are there which we would wish to confess, and which we would desire her to forgive!

There are lessons flowing from this subject adapted to those who are more particularly interested from having recently been called to this trial—lesso is requiring us to submit to God; to be grateful for the example, and counsels, and toils in our behalf of those who have been removed; to imitate them as they imitated their Saviour, and to be prepared to follow them to the world of glory. But on these I will not dwell. There are two thoughts, however, which, in conclusion, I will suggest, addressed to two classes of my hearers.

1. The first relates to those who have had pious mothers, who are now removed to heaven, but whose prayers and counsels they have disregarded. I refer to those who have thus far withheld their hearts from that Saviour whom their mother loved, and with whom she now dwells; who have embraced sentiments such as they know she would not approve; who have made choice of companions such as she lived to warn them against, or who indulge in scenes of revelry and sin such as if she were living you know would break her heart. Go, young man, and walk in the stillness of the evening among the graves. Beneath your feet, in the sacred slumbers of a Christian death, lies a much-loved mother. How calm her slumbers! How sweet the spot! How lovely a mother's grave! How the memory delights to go back to the nursery; the fire-side; the sick bed; the anxious care of a mother! How it loves to recall her gentle look; her eye of love; her kiss at night. At that grave, thoughtless young man, think of thy revels; thy neglect of God; thy forgetfulness of the prayer that she taught thee; thy friendship now for these against whom she warned thee! She sleeps now in death; but from that grave is it fancy that we hear a voice:—'My beloved son! Is this the life that I taught thee to lead? Are these the pleasures which I taught thee to pursue? Did I bear thee, and toil for thee, and wear out my life, that I might train thee for sin, and death and hell?'

The other thought relates to those who now have a Christian mother—and who yet disregard her living counsels and prayers. I have adverted to a law of our being, beautiful in its nature, but painful in its inflictions. The day is coming when that mother will die. You may see her die; or far away, you may hear of her death, and may return and visit her grave. Be thou sure that every unkind look, every disobedient action, every harsh word, will come back and visit thy soul. Be sure you will remember everything that ever gave pain to heart, and remember it with unavailing regret when too late to recall it, or to ask forgiveness. Be sure if you are unkind and disobedient; if you are an infidel or a scoffer; if

you slight her counsels and neglect the God and Saviour to whom she would conduct you, there are laid up in the chambers of your soul, the sources of bitter repentance hereafter—and that you cannot find forgiveness of her whose heart you broke, though you seek it carefully with tears. And be sure that the sweetest of all consolations when she dies, will be found in such love of her Saviour that you will appreciate what is meant when it is said she has gone to Heaven ; and in evidence in your own heart that you will be prepared when the summons comes, to rejoin her in the realms of bliss.

SERMON CCCXCVII.

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DEATH AND IMMORTALITY.

"Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was; and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it."—Eccles. xiii. 7.

This text contemplates the human body at the point of dissolution. It closes an allegorical description of the gradual decay of our physical powers, until that important crisis is reached, when the soul is separated from the body; the latter descending to the grave, and the former taking its flight to the judgment.

Solomon exhorts us not to postpone the duties of religion, and preparation for death, until those evil days—*i. e.* the period of old age and infirmity—come on, in which we shall say, we have no pleasure in them. He then describes the indications of old age creeping on and shading every prospect which was once so bright and attractive to the youthful eye. Even the sun, moon and stars will be less brilliant. A film will gather over the eye premonitory of the darkness of death. The keepers of the house—the strong and active limbs—shall tremble. The teeth shall fail—the back shall bend, and the ear no longer discriminate between the voice of a bird and the daughters of music. The old man shall be full of fears. "He shall be afraid of that which is high, and fears shall be in the way." His head shall blossom white as the almond tree; and the weight of a grasshopper shall prove a burden. Even desire shall fail.

Extinguished in the soul are the very impulses to labour and activity. Other minds must now contrive for him, and other hands must supply him. What now remains but for the silver cord to be loosed, and the wheels of nature to break at the fountain! Then all is over. "The dust returns to the earth as it was, and the spirit unto God who gave it."

I. The first point suggested by the text, on which for a few moments, we may profitably dwell, is, that the soul is here recognised as an existence distinct from the body.

Solomon asserts that the body is dust i. e, a material substance. It is the same essentially as the ground on which we tread. The stroke of death identifies it with dust. Scarcely could it be believed, prior to this event, that our bodies are but clay tenements. Whilst the soul animates them, they seem in every respect dissimilar to the senseless clod. How unlike in its texture and color, is the flesh to its kindred dust. The eye, that inlet of beauty and knowledge, from which the light of mind streams and flashes, and the soft silken lock that trembles to the slightest breath, are but finely organized dust. Penetrate the tomb where beauty reposes, and not a trace will you discover of the once admired form. All that can be found are the rotten fragments of its coffin, or the cold black mold it has enriched. Indisputable evidence this, that the body is but organ ize matter, and is the same essentially as the ground on which we tread. Nature, in this instance, gives her testimony to the truth of revelation. The sacred writer, speaking of the re union of dust with dust, affirms that it was so originally. The allusion is to that act of creative power by which primeval man came into existence. "The Lord God," says Moses "formed him," that is his body, "of the dust of the ground." What thus sprung from dust is destined, by a retributive act of divine justice, to return to dust.

But whilst the body is manifestly but organized matter, and must be resolved into its kindred element, the Soul on the contrary, is a separate existence, immaterial and indestructible.

This is evident from the scriptural account of its creation. The tenor of the narrative, in relation to the formation of the body, is, that the Almighty completed its mechanism ere yet it had the power of life or motion. "He then breathed into its nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul." What language could speak more plainly the separate existence and diverse nature of the soul and the body! The one is a thing of material workmanship. It is constructed entirely out of the dust. The other is not fabricated but inspired. It was born, If I may so speak, out of the breath of God.

It is a living soul; essentially vital, i. e. indestructible. It has neither extension, solidity, nor parts. The causes which operate to dissolve the body can have no such effect, so far as we can see, over the soul. Attentively consider the account given by Moses. It will convince you that in its origin, its nature, and its destiny, the soul is an existence distinct from, and altogether unlike the body. That which came from the breath of

the Almighty was more than mere animal life. Besides intelligence, it possessed moral affections, boundless capacity, and unspotted holiness. In short, the soul of man was an humble type of its great original, in whose nature there is nothing material, for "God is a Spirit."

Had not sin entered to mar and break down this primeval structure what a permanent and blissful union would have subsisted between the soul and the body! Without an unlawful or presumptous stretch of the imagination, we may suppose the soul delighted with her new abode. Its curious workmanship excited her admiration. Its sensitive power over the beauties of creation awakened her wonder. It was a natural and delicate medium of sympathy between herself and the created glories of the universe. Little did she think how soon she was to be driven out of it; and that, by her own criminal act, she was to pull down into the dust this tabernacle of the flesh. Little did she dream that time would ere long lay his shrivelled hand upon that open brow, and leave there the deep furrows of anxiety; or that death would dim that eye and stiffen those limbs and resolve that body into a mass of putrefaction. But so it was, and so to this day it continues to be. Every hour as the mortal remains of some are heard slowly rumbling through our streets, are we impressed with the truth that "Sin has entered into the world," and that "the wages of sin is death."

But is this the end of man? When you have placed his body in the dust, and shaped the hillock over his grave, is there no more of him? Is this the end? The text says, no. It is but the material part that sleeps in the tomb. "The spirit has appeared before God, who gave it." Here, then, is a direct and positive affirmation of the separate existence of the soul, and of its immaterial, i. e. its indestructible nature. If, in the dissolution of the body, death effects no essential change upon the soul; but simply allows of its departure to the presence of God, it is manifest that the latter cannot be identified in its elementary nature with the body. They go, at death, in different directions. The one goes back to mingle again with its original dust, and the other as an accountable agent, is recalled to the presence of him who gave it existence.

By the dissolution of the body, and the temporary separation of the soul from it, neither personal identity nor personal responsibility is materially affected, much less anhihilated. There is in every human sou an individual moral stamp, as characteristic as the differing features of the human body. It respects not only the redeemed in contradistinction from the wicked, but also the varying traits and attainments of each individual. Speaking of Abraham, whose body had slept for ages, the scripture says, in proof that his individual soul was recognized as existing in a separate state, far away from the slumbering body: "God is not the God of the dead, but of the living."

Again: We may consider the body as a mere mechanical structure, adapted to the purposes and circumstances which mark its present state of being.

It is manifestly, in all its parts, arranged with a view to the convenience

use and enjoyment of the present world. The eye is adapted to receive, and transmit the rays of light so as to form a perfect image nearthe b rain which image is the medium of perception. In like manner the lungs are adapted to the air, the ear to sound, the nerves to touch and sensibility, the taste and smell to food and fragrance. Some of these faculties, it is said, will perform their functions even after the soul has departed. The eye, for instance, will give an image on the retina, and the ear will vibrate to sound. But ideas are no longer received by the image or the vibration. The mansion is deserted.

We grant that so intimate is the connection in this life between the soul and the body ; so mutually dependent, so sympathetically blended are they, that upon the breaking up of the mortal machinery, from whatsoever cause, the vital principle ceases, and the soul departs.

So far as we can see, there is in the structure of the human body an adaptation to the scenes and circumstances of the present life only. There is nothing in its physical organization that points to a future state. Its connection with and its influence over the soul has, as we shall see, an important bearing on the present responsibility, and future destiny of the latter. It fulfils this mission, and then, by the decree of heaven, it expires. The part which it is to act in a future state requires a new organization, adapting it to a higher and more ethereal medium. Such a change it is destined to undergo. "It is sown a natural body, it will be raised a spiritual body." Its resurrection is practicable by the power of God, and is certain by the promise of God.

But when we consider the nature and properties of the soul, we at once discover something that has reference to another state of being. If, as in the unconscious brute, there were indications of nothing more than animal life ; if the habits and propensities of the living agent evinced no traces of immortality, we might well be in doubt as to the separate existence and indestructible nature of the soul. But on this point there can be no doubt. There is in man more than mere emphatic life. Between him and the brute creation there is a very broad distinction. From a necessity of his nature, he is obliged to admit moral obligation—to feel himself the subject of praise and blame. He can be impressed with the knowledge of God, and with a sense of accountability. Now, that part of the human nature in which these thoughts, and feelings, and moral impulses dwell, is the human soul. Too subtle for the examination of our senses, it discovers its nature only by its operations and effects. This is the deathless principle in man. Its imperishable nature is neither proved nor disproved by the possession of animal life ; but is seen in the scope of its intellect, and in the exercise of its high moral faculties. Organized matter may have animal life ; but mere animal life, is of itself, no proof of immortality. The essential and distinctive attributes of a soul are found in the higher faculties of reason and moral responsibility.

Whilst, therefore, we find in the body nothing that indicates a futur state—its organization relating only to the circumstances of our earthly condition—we have no reason to wonder, that at death it should return to

its kindred dust. And if, in the soul, there were no more indications than there are in the body of a separate existence and a future state, we might be justified in the conclusion that men, like brute animals died to live no more. But when we find in man a capacity for unlimited improvement, which the brute has not; when we find a longing after immortality, a conscience or moral faculty, an apprehension of future happiness and misery—neither of which can be predicted of brutes—we are compelled to make a distinction between animal life and the immortal soul. We see at a glance that the soul, unlike the body, is adapted to a future state, and craves a provision for eternity. At present it is an imprisoned chrysalis, its latent energies restricted by the casement that confines it; but the era of its expansion and its liberty is yet to come. Casting off at death its exuvæ, it will develop the strength to suffer or to enjoy, of its own appropriate immortality.

Thus is the soul emphatically the man. It is reason's throne. It is the wild fancy's habitation. It is the only proper subject of praise and blame. Its union with the body, though wonderful, is not absolutely necessary either to its existence or its activity. It can and it does exist apart from the body. Whilst awaiting the resurrection and reunion of that body, it neither passes through a purgatorial purification, nor sleeps in a dreamy elysium. In scope and activity, its unfettered powers may rival the energies of Lucifer or of Gabriel. Tracing the good man's soul in its flight to eternity we may say with Young—

> "See how it presses on the angel's wing,
> Which is the Seraph, which the child of clay?"

II. The character and responsibility of the soul are effected, in a very important sense, by its union with the body.

It has pleased the Almighty God to place the human soul and body in such close connection with a view not simply to the convenience and pleasure of our present relations, but as a test also of the moral affections. In the original transgression the body we know was the means of exciting the soul to wrong. The forbidden fruit was "pleasant to the eye and good for food." The sensual propensity which ought to have been resisted was indulged. Hence, "lust having conceived, brought forth sin." And since that fatal event, the body, acting still more powerfully on the soul, is influential in affecting its moral feelings, and so shaping its destiny for eternity. The abuse of the body to purposes of evil is universal. We make it the instrument "of unrighteousness to sin." We allow it to control the desires and the affections. We give it more influence than God's law will justify. Many idolize it; and all, by nature and practice, are more or less its slaves. Behold the Epicure saying,—"What shall I eat and what shall I drink:" and the pleasurist asking for some new excitement of the senses; and the fashionist decorating the body at the expense of the soul; and the libertine converting himself into a brute! All these, by abusing the body, load the soul with deep criminality as it passes on to the limit of its probation.

If the life that now is were the boundary of human existence there might be the shadow of an apology for all this. The voluptuary might riot. Ambition might snatch the laurel reeking with tears and blood. Wealth might build her Babylons, and swell with conscious pride. Men might seize the passing pleasure as they were crowding to the gulf of annihilation. The alternate laugh of joy and shriek of despair; the shout of drunken debauch and groans of dissolving nature; the song of merriment and the dirge of death might be heard at once, nor produce that shuddering horror which we feel when thinking of the Soul and of its destiny. But the same inspired author who has said, "the spirit shall return unto God who gave it," has declared also "that for all these things God will bring us into judgment."

The character and destiny of the soul in a future state is made to depend on its characteristics in this life. Its inhabitation of the body has much to do in fixing these characteristics, and of course in shaping its eternal destiny. If the body is abused; or preferred to the soul, if its wants and pleasures are consulted more than the interests of the soul, it will inevitably augment the guilt and condemnation of the sinner.

And here we all stand acknowledged culprits even at the bar of conscience. Condemnation rests upon every soul of us. In this respect we have all abused our nature and broken the law of God. And were salvation to depend on our works, not one soul of us could be saved. But, blessed be God, we have a better ground of hope, laid in the merit and sufferings of the Son of God. Wherever and to whomsoever his name is made known a new feature is given to human probation. But if this last this only hope be rejected, the sinner dies without remedy. He dies for ever.

The term of this probation is, for wise reasons, made shorter in some cases than in others. Three score and ten is the scriptural limit. A few overleap this boundary whilst millions come short of it. Adrift on the current of life, men seldom think that every moment they are forming a character to which death will give immutability. Enters this thought into the bosom of the busy merchant building his only hopes on this sandy shore? Does the son of pleasure, pampering his idolized body, does he reflect that the death-angel is but awaiting the signal to send him horror struck before his God? Look at the careless rejecter of the gospel! He throws away his soul, when duty comes in conflict with desire, with a hardihood that challenges the Almighty, and sets at defiance eternal retribution. But is God indifferent to all this? It is true, he is long suffering. He lengthens out their probation. "The sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily." But he has a limit set which they

cannot pass. When the sinners cup of iniquity is full, there is a movement among his ministers of wrath; and whilst one is weaving his shroud, and another measuring him for his coffin, the paleness of death gathers upon his face, and he lays himself down to die. This slight indisposition he imagines, will speedily pass away. So think the friends also. But the light talk of hope dies away into suppressed whispers of anxiety, and death, like a nightmare, is seen creeping upon his cold bosom. "The dust must now return to earth as it was, and the spirit must return to God who gave it." There is no discharge in this warfare. Go the Soul must, prepared or unprepared. Inexorable death! He hears no prayer—admits no parley—grants no reprieve. His approach appals the stoutest heart. But why are we afraid of death? Is it because of the pain that precedes the convulsive gasp? Is it the winding sheet—the coffin—the cold damp vault—the mouldering corpse, that so wither up the heart? These have their influence; but these are not all. It is conscious guilt—it is the thought of retribution that curtains the death-bed with its horrors. And what can break their force when eternity is lowering in awful grandeur on the dying eye? There is, thanks be to God, one thing which can break their force; but that, alas, in ten thousand instances, has been scorned or neglected. The sinner, rejecting Christ, has ventured to meet the storm alone. Horrible is the death of an unbeliever; for he dies "without God and without hope." Then goes the Spirit into the presence of Him who gave it. After death is the judgment. Quick as thought flies the soul to the tribunal of God.

Death, my hearers, is a common event. You can scarce look out of your windows, but a funeral train is passing by. The dust is returning to the dust. The soul is pressing on to its final account. To your door the summons will soon come, and the grand question is, are you ready? Is your house in order, your lamp trimmed and burning, your salvation sure?

> "What are your hopes beyond the grave,
> How stands that dread account?"

Are you straining every energy up to the work of your salvation? Are you subordinating every earthly concern to that of the undying Soul? Are you throwing your affrighted spirits into mercy's arms? Are you smiting the heavens with your cries of anguish? Ah no; the lethargy that precedes death is upon many of you; from which I fear you awake not, until the terrors of a dying hour apprise you that it is too late for ever. Avert your eye from this dreadful

precipice you cannot. Step by step you are moving towards the brink. Your feet will soon press the crumbling margin. "O for some guardian angel high!" O for an arm then to cling to! The body sentenced and sealed, for death, cries to you; prepare. The soul reeking with guilt, shuddering at the thought of eternity—cries out, prepare. Conscience, filing already the vials of wrath, cries, prepare. Heaven with its glories, and Hell with all its horrors, cry out prepare; prepare to meet thy God!

SERMON CCCXCIX.

OBSTACLES TO CONVERSION.

"I pray thee have me excused."—Luke xiv. 18.

There is some reason why every man who hears the gospel is not a Christian. To inquire and ascertain what is the true and exact reason is a matter of solemn importance to each individual. The time and the opportunity for doing this will soon have passed by for ever. "There are many persons who think that they wish to be Christians, and yet feel confident that they are not." Why are they not Christians? What is the obstacle which prevents so many from accepting those terms of salvation, which God has offered.

1. Is it that God is unwilling to save them? No! No one dares say so, or even think so. God has removed all doubt upon that point, not only by his invitations and entreaties, but also by his unqualified declaration, "as my soul liveth, I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, but that he turn from his way and live."

2. Is it that God has not made suitable provision for the return of all? The atonement, which the Saviour has offered is so ample, that he can say "whosoever cometh to me I will in no wise cast out." Provision is made for all. Salvation is offered to all. Whosoever will believe in the Saviour shall not perish, but have everlasting life.

3. Is it that there are no motives sufficiently powerful to influence to a Christian life? And what more powerful motives can be conceived of than those that are urged upon almost every page of the Bible. Eternal happiness is the reward of obedience—eternal wo, the consequence of continued sin.

4. Is it because the sinner is not elected, that he is not saved? The terms of salvation are offered equally to all. And whoever are willing to accept those terms, is elected to everlasting life. They who will not accept, and they only, will perish. Forgiveness is offered with the utmost sincerity to every one who will repent, and accept forgiveness for the Saviour's sake.

5. Is the sinner unable to repent? Who will venture to accuse God of requiring that of us, which we are unable to perform! Every man's judgment rises up at once and condemns him, if for a moment he tries to palliate continuance in sin, by such a thought. Every one knows not only that he can, but also that he ought to renounce sin, and give his heart to his Maker.

6. Is the duty of repentance neglected because there are no convictions of sin? Where is the heart which has not felt such convictions? Who has not at times felt the reproaches of conscience? Who in truth must not plead guilty to the charge of having often grieved the Spirit away. Oh how importunate has God been in his strivings with us by his Spirit. We have heard his warning voice in every funeral bell which has tolled—in every dying scene we have witnessed, in every joy that has "crowned our days" and in every pain we have borne. But the voice of conscience we have stifled, and the warnings of the Spirit we have disregarded.

7. Is this world so full of happiness that we have no inducement to look to another world for joy? Every heart knoweth its own bitterness. It is not in poetry alone that this world is described as a "vale of tears." There is in every heart an aching void, which the joys of earth cannot fill. Oh, how constantly is our path through life strewed with disappointed hopes! How often is one almost persuaded to be a Christian.

Why then is it that so many continue unreconciled to God? What are the obstacles so powerful, that the entreaties of God, the sufferings of the Savior—the strivings of the Spirit do not remove them. What is it that can induce a man to neglect religion at the hazard of his soul? The things above enumerated, clearly do not stand in the way. Some of the prominent obstacles we will now mention.

1. An indistinct belief in universal salvation. Many indulge in a vague impression that all will be saved. This lulls them into security. They think of course that no especial effort is necessary for salvation. Some openly avow this belief. Others secretly cherish it. But whenever it has any hold upon the heart, it seems to deaden conscience, and to lead one to feel that a life of sin is not inconsistent with eternal happiness in heaven. How often does one ward off the arguments and appeals of the pulpit, by the soothing reply that, live as he may, he will eventually be drawn smoothly and pleasantly to blest abodes. While one cherishes this impression, be it ever so vague, ever so indistinct, it is the most effectual preventitive of contrition for sin and faith in Christ. With thousands it stands in the way of eternal re-

demption. Thousands it entices through paths of sinful indulgence to a death-bed of despair and an eternity of wo. They will not enter the door which Christ has opened, because they hope to climb over some other way.

2. Thoughtlessness is another most formidable and most ruinous obstacle. There are thousands in Christian lands, and with intelligent minds, who will never allow themselves time for serious reflection, They enter the church upon the Sabbath, that the sound of the gospel may fall upon the ear, but make no mental effort that its truths may be conveyed to their hearts. They hear the funeral bell, but will not think that they must die. They look upon the cold corps, but will not by reflection make the case their own. They hear of eternity, but will not send the mind in serious thought to explore its limitless duration, its overwhelming scenes. Most studiously, and most wickedly do they exclude reflection, and are borne as bubbles on the deceitful surface of life's gliding stream. O how strange it is that any mind can refrain from reflection, when placed in the scenes which now surround us. Death is certain. The grave is the termination of all our earthly hopes. The trump of the Archangel will soon burst upon the ear. The resurrection morn will soon gleam upon the eye. The eternal glories of heaven will soon fill the heart with rapture, or the glooms of hell, pervade it with undying despair. And yet men will not think! How strange! How incomprehensible! They will not think, and therefore by thousands they are perishing to be eternal outcasts from heaven.

3. A wrong view of the mercy of God is another source of ruin not uncommon in the world. It is not very unusual for persons to think that God is so merciful that he will not be strict in his requirements. But can God receive to heaven those who will not repent of sin, and who will acquire no taste for heaven's purity and heaven's joy. Can those who here never will bow the knee to Jesus; never will speak his praise, be admitted to those blest abodes where he reigns supreme, where every knee bows at the mention of his name and every heart thrills at the remembrance of his love. "I cast myself upon the mercy of God for salvation," said a hardened and impenitent and dying sinner. Oh what infatuation. The goodness of God should lead to repentance; if it does not, it never can be manifested in our salvation. The only way to be saved is the way which God has pointed out.

4. Another obstacle far from uncommon is a desire to obtain a new heart in a different way from that in which alone the Bible assures us a new heart can be obtained. Such persons will wish they were Christians. They will try to feel interested in serious things. They will attend church; go

to funerals, and place themselves under the influence of all the means of grace. They will read the Bible, and occasionally try the efficacy of prayer. And thus they are hoping that they shall eventually obtain a new heart. They will do anything but just that very thing which God tells them to do—"cease to do evil; learn to do well." They will do anything but repent of sin, seek forgiveness in the name of Jesus, and at once commence a life of prayer and of active effort. Thousands thus go on through life. While in this state of mind they know it is sinful, and conscience reproaches them every day. This is not a state of innocent ignorance. They know that the path to heaven is plain and strait; that we are to make no compromise with sin; that at once we must enter upon all the duties of the Christian life, with prayer for strength to persevere to the end.

5. The unwillingness to give up a worldly spirit is another obstacle which ruins thousands. Every man's common sense teaches him, that supreme attachment to anything of an earthly nature is inconsistent with the requirements of the gospel. Every man in heart knows that if he would be a Christian, he must make it the one great object of life to prepare for heaven and to reclaim a guilty world to God. And in almost every bosom there is a struggle, arduous, though it be hidden, between the claims of religion and the allurements of the world. How often will the ambitious, and the worldly, and the gay, confess the emptiness of their pursuits, and express regret that they are not walking in the Christian's path. Ah, this is the confession, which conscience, that faithful monitor, will at times extort from the tortured bosom. And yet will the infatuated votary of the world glide along, through empty and heartless joys, till the lamentations is upon his lips, "the harvest is past, the summer is ended, and I am not saved."

6. Pride, or an unwillingness to confess being in the wrong, is another obstacle which ruins thousands. Nothing is harder for the unsubdued heart, than the sincere open confession of having lived in sin, and of needing forgiveness. The attitude which the sinner assumes practically and really is, that God must confess that he has been wrong in his requirements, and yield to the stubborness of the sinner's heart. But few have the hardihood to say this in words, while thousands have the effrontery to exhibit it in their lives. Every man who does not cry for mercy is exhibiting this feeling to God. It is impossible to deceive our own hearts by denying this, for we must either admit that we have done wrong, or accuse God of injustice in requiring contrition and confession. This pride of heart must be subdued, even to the lowly spirit of a little child, or there can be no admission to God's court above.

Such are some of the principal obstacles which stand in the way of the conversion of the sinner. The path to wo is downward, and its passage rapid. No effort is necessary to hasten along its crowded ways. The current bears you onward, and you need but float upon its surface, and you will soon enter those gloomy depths whence there is no return. The obstacles in the way of conversion are powerful. They are not to be overcome by the transient feeling of a moment; they are not to be removed by waiting in indolence. They demand great effort to overcome them. If there be anything in nature which calls for strenuous exertions, and which holds out sufficient motives to encourage such exertions, it is the salvation of your soul. Oh, do you never think of that eternity which is before you, of those realms of boundless space, where in a short time must be your endless home? Do you ever think of the wonders of a Saviour's love, of the sympathy of celestial bands, of the glittering mansion, of the heavenly robe, of the everlasting song. Can you think of such things, and not have your heart burn within you, and not be impelled by desires which never can be extinguished, to reach forward by every possible exertion, to the attainment of that world?" Ask and ye shall receive; seek and ye shall find; knock and it shall be opened to you."

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SERMON CCCC.

THE NECESSITY AND BENEFITS OF EARLY RELIGIOUS TRAINING

A SERMON,

PREACHED AT THE REQUEST OF THE

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AT PHILADELPHIA,

MAY 18, 1845.

BY RICHARD S. STORRS, D. D.

BRAINTREE, MASS.

"Whom shall he teach knowledge? and whom shall he make to understand doctrine? Them that are weaned from the milk, and drawn from the breasts. For precept must be upon precept, precept upon precept, line upon line, line upon line, here a little and there a little."—Isaiah xxviii. 9, 10.

Commentators do not harmonize perfectly in their construction of this passage; but whether we regard it as the language of the drunkards of Ephraim, deriding the Lord's messengers for the plainness and urgency of their unwelcome instructions, or as the language of the prophet himself affirming interrogatively the spiritual ignorance and imbecility of the people, with their prophets and priests, it can hardly be questioned that the Holy Spirit clearly indicates the important truth that the knowledge of our relations to God and eternity is to be earnestly inculcated on the rising generation. There may be little hope that the uncircumcised ear of *age* will hearken to instruction, or that the *habitual* transgressor will listen to the warning voice of the Lord; but there is hope of the young, that precept upon precept and line upon line, drawn from the oracles of God, even though uttered by stammering lips, will not be unavailing. The reported remark of one

of England's noble sons, that "were we deprived of what we learn during the three first years of our lives, we should be the most ignorant beings on the face of the globe," is less extravagant in point of fact than in sound; and there had been no tinge of extravagance nor less of shrewdness in the remark, if, instead of three, he had specified the first seven or ten years of life. In those years, beyond question, are laid the foundations of the social and religious character which every man carries to the grave; and the firmness and fair proportions of the structure reared upon them, will correspond with their solidity and breadth. And when in varied language God commands the father to make known the truth unto his children—to teach the words that he commands diligently unto them—to talk of them when sitting in the house, and walking by the way, lying down and rising up, and to bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, he surely imposes on every man the express obligation to pour divine instruction, in every variety of form and without sparing, into the minds of his infant offspring. And then, admitting the principle involved in the second great law of the universe—the equal worth of all human souls—we cannot, without absurdity, object to the claims of any portion of the rising generation within the reach of our benevolence, upon our practical regards to their instruction in the revealed will of God.

If we are to be delivered from the hand of strange children, whose mouth speaketh vanity, and their right hand is a right hand of falsehood; if our sons are to be as plants grown up in their youth, and our daughters as corner-stones polished after the similitude of a palace, then must they be taught that fear of the Lord which is the beginning of wisdom, and their responsibility to *Him* for all their doings, and the extent and spirituality of the law which binds them to the cultivation of purity and love in all their relations to universal being. And if they are to be themselves saved from the dominion of lust, and the power of the second death, they must be taught by "precept upon precept, and line upon line," that they are shapen in iniquity and conceived in sin; that they are estranged from God, from their first entrance into life; that the blood of Christ alone cleanseth from sin; and that his intercessions only secure them forgiveness and eternal life. And they must be taught that no man, except he be born again, can see the kingdom of heaven; that the Holy Spirit alone convinceth of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment; that repentance, faith, and new obedience, are essential to acceptance with God; that rewards of surpassing glory are laid up for the righteous, and woes of unutterable intensity are reserved for the wicked. Of these truths, so fundamental in the Christian system, none can be overlooked in the instruction of the young more than the old, without putting in jeopardy their welfare for time and eternity; and *these alone* explained

with simplicity, and diligently enforced, will leave nothing, in the form of direct instruction, to be attempted for their salvation.

You will allow me to suggest a few obvious considerations, in illustration of the high importance of instruction so explained and enforced.

1. The youth learns nothing good until he is taught. Foolishness is bound up in his heart. Though wise to do evil, to do good he has no knowledge. It is commonly an arduous enterprise to educate him for *worldly* eminence; but far greater are the skill and labor necessary to educate him for glory, honor, and immortality. In the *first* case, the difficulties to be overcome lie chiefly in the volatility of the mind, reluctance to salutary discipline, indifference to useful knowledge, the fascinations of novelty, the love of amusement, and a thirst for sensual gratifications. In the *last* case, beside these difficulties, existing in full strength, there is a heartfelt *aversion* to the claims of *religion* to be removed, and a love of moral culture to be inspired; the force of corrupt example operating on every side, is to be broken down, and the efforts of the adversary to cultivate tares instead of wheat on the virgin soil, are to be defeated. The young mind, it is true, has all the faculties of riper years, but they are yet in their immaturity, and wait the lapse of time to complete their development. Reason and judgment are too weak to give a wise direction to the course of life, even when perception, imagination and memory, have acquired great activity and energy; and unless controlled and guided by the paramount influence of correct instruction constantly imparted, the youth is ever liable to plunge into darkness and ruin. He is ever exposed also to the withering blast that sweeps along the path of the wily unbeliever and the bold transgressor. Unhappily the number of those who cast off fear, and abandon themselves to works of iniquity is not small, even in an age and country as enlightened as ours; and, with them, virtue in her loveliest forms is the subject of unceasing reproach, and vice in its most unseemly garb is the theme of commendation and applause; wine and debauchery inflame their blood; stratagem and violence absorb their thick-coming fancies, and daringness of spirit and hardihood of resistance to the claims of God, give them fearful power over the simplicity of childhood.

And what if God hath said, "If sinners entice thee, consent thou not"—the untaught and inexperienced youth, heedless of the admonition, lends a willing ear to the Syren voice that assures him of safety in indulgences that perverted appetites demand. Certain it is that no man can take fire in his bosom, and his clothes not be burned, nor go upon hot coals and his feet not be burned; but the young, even if instructed, are slow to credit what the Almighty saith, and, obediently, to turn away from the companionship of

fools. The structure of the mind, the depravity of the heart, the force of ungodly example, and the direct efforts of those who set their mouths against the heavens, render it *certain* that the *untaught* youth will learn nothing good.

2. The susceptibilities of the young mind to deep and enduring impression are strongly marked. The melted wax receives not more readily the impress of the seal, nor does the fused metal take more certainly the form of the mould into which it is cast, than the infant mind receives the principles and yields to the passions which sway maturer minds in contact with it. And the impressions of the earliest years are not lost, down to life's latest period. Long after those of later date are effaced are they retained in nearly all their original freshness ; and so inwrought are they with the very framework of the moral system, that death itself fails to annihilate them, and the light of eternity restores them in more than their original vividness. Whether these impressions shall assimilate the child to his Maker, or strengthen his inherent corruptions, is a momentous question. It is a fair question, too, worthy to be revolved by every one who bears a part in the training of the youthful world around him—whether the principles of wisdom and truth shall be permanently stamped on the fair page of childhood, assimilating it to God, or whether the principles of error shall take their place, and form fit sluiceways for floods of vain imaginings bearing away the soul irresistibly to the ocean of death! Give to the mind of youth the moral culture which its susceptibilities permit, and which the authority of Heaven requires; watch the first buddings of its moral powers, and direct its earliest efforts to objects of transcendant interest, as the scriptures reveal them, and the labor cannot be in vain. Millions, unable to distinguish the right hand from the left, have received impressions from the lips of maternal piety of infinite value ; and other millions, by the combination of scriptural instruction with parental prayers and tears have been prepared to swell the joys of heaven by their labors and songs, who had otherwise been left to everlasting wailings. You have seen the rich intervale over which the plough and the harrow have never passed; it was not bare like the sands of an African desert, or the hill-tops, stretching upwards into regions of perpetual frost; but luxuriance was there—the luxuriance, indeed, of the bramble instead of the vine, of the morass instead of the wheatfield ; but it was luxuriance still. Such is the mind richly furnished with heaven's endowments, but denied the moral culture, to which by birthright it is entitled. Its productions, though abundant are useless, as the weeds of the garden, or noxious as the grapes of Sodom, and the clusters of Gomorrah. "The two legged animal" says one "that eats of nature's dainties what his taste or appetite craves, and satisfies his thirst at the crystal fountain; who propagates his kind as

occasion or lust prompt; repels injuries, and takes alternate res and repose, is like a tree of the forest, purely of nature's growth. But this same savage, hath within him the seeds of the logician, the man of taste and breeding, the orator, the statesman, the man of virtue, and the saint; which seeds, though planted in his mind by nature, yet, through want of culture and exercise, must lie for ever buried and be hardly perceivable by himself or others."

Though this opinion of the philosopher needs an important qualification in one point at least, it is yet too clearly true as a whole to admit of question. Every mind is rich in native wealth though it be yet in the ore, and is capable of an expansion large enough to embrace an amount of knowledge and love as yet unattained by the most exalted spirits of heaven; and, if sanctified, it will pour into the treasury of God a boundless revenue of imperishable riches. But abandon it to wasteness, or allow its susceptibilities to be engrossed with the dreamings of infidelity, and the pleasures of sense, and it had been better for it at the moment of its birth, to have been blotted out from among Jehovah's works.

3. It has passed into a maxim that "knowledge is power." The sceptre awes nations into submission to individual will; the sword slays thousands, and the arm of the victor binds millions in chains; but it is *instructed* mind that sways the sceptre, wields the sword, and nerves the conqueror's arm. Without some knowledge of the philosophy of man, and the principles of science, and without a warm imagination, an eloquent tongue, or a vigorous pen no man within the domains of civilization, can maintain a permanent ascendancy over his brethren. He may stir up strife and contention; he may shed torrents of blood, and pile up mountains of human bones, but he leaves the world as destitute of every monument of well directed skill and power, as are the wilds of Africa, or the untrodden forests of America, while his own name perishes, or becomes the loathing of mankind. Knowledge, indeed, like every other gift of heaven, not excepting even the blood of Christ, is often perverted to purposes of mischief, for

"Perversion marks man's guilty way"

from the cradle to the grave, but it nullifies the value of no blessing of God; and not wealth or honor, health or pleasure, instinct or conscience, are less justly contemned for their frequent abuse and prostitution to ignoble ends, than that furniture of the mind which is sometimes desecrated by ambition and revenge. Shall heaven's bounties be dashed from existence because of their misuse, and the darkness of primeval chaos be thrown over the manifested goodness of God, because man employs it to accomplish wicked devices?

And then no wealth like that of mind rises superior to the plottings of knavery, the fluctuations of fortune, and the capricious action of the elements of nature. Disease may dim its lustre, and age abate its force, and an overruling Providence defeat its immediate aims; but not even death itself, sweeping away all that is earthly beside, lays upon it the hand of violence. Man carries it with him, unharmed by the convulsion that rends asunder the body and spirit, beyond the grave, where it secures him a place but little lower than the angels, and forms an amount of capital, if I may so speak, proportioned to his present acquisitions, with which he enters on the holy commerce of heaven. Of course you will not understand me to speak of knowledge and piety as synonymous. They may live and flourish to some extent independently. But wherever they co-exist, knowledge is the most efficient handmaid of religion, while in their separation, ignorance is religion's most powerful antagonist.

"Blessed is he who knoweth wisdom and instruction and perceiveth the words of understanding." Connect love and knowledge, as they have not unfrequently been connected in ancient and modern times, and give them a fair field for their united labors, and none can estimate fully the amount of their happy results to the glory of God, and the welfare of the world.

True it is that *Baxter* and *Owen*, *Leighton* and *Edwards*, to say nothing of thousands more, endeared to Christian recollection by learning and piety, with *Noah* and *Moses*, *Elijah* and *Paul* had entered heaven though possessed of a faith no more intelligent than that which sustains her who—

"Just knows, and knows no more, her Bible true."

Yet with only a common measure of intellectual resources and cultivation, the luminous productions of their pens, and the holy example of their lives had done little to strengthen the faith of their brethren, and bless the world. Learning gave lustre and efficiency to their piety. Knowledge, sanctified by communion with Heaven gave them the mighty influence they threw over the generations in which they lived; an influence that has come down to our own times, and will flow onward, in ever-widening streams, till time shall be no more.

Their intellectual treasures embalm their piety in sweet and everlasting remembrance. Not the wealth of Croesus, combined with the valor of Hannibal, and the rhetoric of Tully, and the clemency of Augustus, and the virtues of all the wise men and great men of pagan antiquity, had they fallen to the share of these holy men had left upon their memory the perfumes they now bear and which the lapse of ages will not exhale; nor have placed on their heads, crowns so studded with gems of unfading lustre.

And these are the more cogent reasons for urging onward the march of intellectual improvement, because the day has arrived when infidelity, throwing aside to some extent, its distinctive name, and the philosophical garb of other years, penetrates every community in more specious guise and spreads abroad

> "Its legions, angel forms—
> Thick as autumnal leaves that strew the brooks
> Of Vallambrosa"

Or, if circumstances permit, assumes a bold and haughty front and challenges "the sacramental host of God's elect" in the boastful spirit of Philistia's champion; when Romanism too, half-healed of its deadly wound, resolves to strengthen the despotisms of the Old World, and crush the liberties of the New, and fastens upon all nations, the yoke of a baptized Paganism, heavier far than ever Boodh or Brama laid upon the neck of China or Hindostan; and when errors in every shape lulling individual and public conscience into profound repose, banishing the fear of future retribution, and cherishing illusory hopes of heaven, start up like mushrooms among the fens and marshes of abounding ignorance, and multiply like venomous reptiles in solitudes penetrated by the rays of a vertical sun; now is the time for every friend of God and man to disengage himself from the folds of a voluntary supineness, to put on zeal as a cloak and take the word of God for his sword, and press onward, cleaving his way through the thickest of the foe, maintaining in simplicity the claims of God, vindicating the honor of the Cross, and opening the door for thousands around him, and coming after him, to enter the kingdom of heaven. And for labors and conflicts such as these, let the young be qualified by teaching them knowledge, and making them understand doctrine, giving them "precept upon precept, precept upon precept, line upon line, line upon line, here a little and there a little."

4. Scriptural knowledge is not only of surpassing *value*, but is more easily imparted to the young than most of that human knowledge for which the opening powers are often severely tasked. Said a great and holy man of old, whose counsellors were eminent men and learned in all the wisdom of their generation, "I have more understanding than all my teachers." Spending his youth amid his father's flocks at Bethlehem and blessed no doubt with pious parental instruction, he made the testimonies of the Lord his meditation by day and by night. God, in all his greatness was ever before him. The Holy Spirit instructed him. He searched the scriptures and pondered the path of his feet. Wonderful is the adaptation of the book of God to the demands of the immortal mind, whether in youth or old age. "Blessed is the man" and blessed is the child, "whose delight is in the law of the Lord;

for he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of waters, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season." He has comfort in the depths of affliction, strength in the hour of temptation, and comes forth unharmed from the perils of the world, rejoicing in the labors and tears that assure him a rich harvest of glory. Whether the powers of reason crave the loftiest subjects for their exercise; or the imagination asks the widest field wherein to expatiate; or the spirit of devotion seeks an exhaustless store of aliment; or the powers of eloquence require appropriate argument and diction to move the senate chamber or the sch ol room, all is found here. For the ignorant there is overflowing instruction in its simplest forms; for the learned there are mysteries without end, profound enough to engage and baffle an angel's powers: for the careless and the headstrong there is reproof uttered in the strongest terms; for the timid and irresolute there are encouragement and assurance in the most soothing language; for the erring there are directions that none can misunderstand; for the presumptuous warnings given in tones of thunder, and for the broken-hearted, consolation is poured forth "in strains as sweet as angels use." It is a mine of unfathomable wealth, and fully yields its soul-enriching treasures to the search of the diligent while it leaveth poverty enough to him that dealeth in it with a slack hand. And if the unstable and unbelieving find therein things hard to be understood which they wrest to their own destruction, the humble and devout find more therein which are intelligible and plain as they

> "Read and revere the sacred page
> Which not the whole creation could produce,
> Which not the conflagration shall destroy,"

they hide it in their hearts, con it over in their hours of retirement, and pour it forth with joy on the ears of the children of folly. When *Tertullian* spends year after year in reading only the sacred volume —and *Jerome* commits it all to memory—and *Theodosius*, burdened with the cares of empire all the day, devotes to it the night-watches—and *Locke*, a prince among philosophers, gives the last fifteen years of life to perfecting his acquaintance with it, because "it hath God for its author, salvation for its end, and truth, without any mixture of error, for its matter"—we have a practical demonstration of its value in the estimation of the highest order of human intellect. And a better argument still is supplied to us on this point by Paul's commendation of the noble *Bereans*, and of the youthful *Timothy* and the humble *Priscilla* and *Aquila*, whose diligence and proficiency in the study of the scriptures prepared them to contend earnestly for the faith and to expound the way of God more perfectly than even the eloquent Apollos.

Was it worthy the care of Heaven to give to man such revelations of principles lying at the foundation of the whole moral govern-

ment of God? It cannot then be unworthy of the care of man to write them as with the point of a diamond on the enduring tablets of his soul. Unless his affections cluster around them until they control his movements, and impel him to extend their influence over the world, he achieves no permanent victory over spiritual enemies, and is shut out from the Paradise of God.

Can this sublime knowledge be imparted to the young? Why question it? If difficulties arise from immaturity and levity of mind, they are more than balanced by freedom from the prejudices of age, and the perplexing cares of life; by their docility and instinctive desire to penetrate the unknown; and by their unsuspecting confidence in the ability of their appointed teachers. Their natural aversion to God is but partially developed, and waits the coming of riper years to mature its strong resistance to the Divine claims. In the mean time skill, tenderness, and perseverance will interest the kindlier feelings of their social nature, and bring their expanding energies into successful operation, so that when followed by the "power from on high" in answer to prayer, each opposing influence will give way, and they will bow to the force of truth. Nor is this affirmed so much as a matter of just theory as of facts, for in all generations the youthful mind has readily yielded to the continued dropping of Divine instruction; leaving it to be inferred that in the present and future generations the same experiment faithfully made shall be equally successful. And the eagerness with which children and youth seize upon the explanation of facts in the kingdoms of nature and Providence, or the historical illustration of great principles; upon similitudes and allegories, whether from the lips of *Jesus Christ*, of *Solomon*, or *Bunyan*, discloses a foundation on which the man of benevolence may place himself, and pour instruction into their minds on the most sublime themes of revelation with little danger of labouring in vain. Even those *difficulties* over which many mature but darkened minds stumble into perdition, may be removed from the path-way of the young; and the plainer preceptive and doctrinal teachings of the Holy Spirit may be indelibly inscribed on their understanding by familiar reference to the facts of natural science, to the movements of Providence among the nations, and to the laws, customs, manners, and religions prevailing in different tribes and generations of men. Harmless curiosity ever awake and vigorous in childhood derives gratification from illustrations like these, and the mind nourished and cheered by constant accessions to its fund of information, arises to new and animated effort, and brings within its grasp that knowledge of God and the unseen world which purifies and elevates all its aspirations.

As a matter of fact, children have often been thus taught divine knowledge beyond those of riper years; and what has been already done, may be again done on an enlarged scale. And whatever

can be done to render the oracles of God intelligible to the young ought to be done. For no mind of celestial birth is ever guiltlessly doomed to spiritual ignorance and perverseness when by earnest and prayerful effort it can be brought up from the horrible pit and miry clay, and established on the Rock of ages. And surrounded as it is with corruption, cramped by its connexion with the body, and exposed to hostile influences without number, it can be neglected only at the hazard of everlasting shame and contempt.

5. The weightiest obligations rest on PARENTS to give their children such instruction. Nature constitutes them their guardians and teachers; and instinctive affection binds them to provide for their prosperity, and secure them the world's respect and friendship. These obligations are sanctioned and enlarged by the express authority of heaven, binding them to train them up in the way they should go, and secure them an inheritance among those that are sanctified.

As Abraham commanded his children and household after him to keep the way of the Lord—as Hannah lent her son to the LORD all the days of his life—as David walked within his house with a perfect heart, and Eunice made her son from a child to know the scriptures, so is every parent bound to command his children to observe and do after the words of God's law. Children are an heritage of the Lord as truly as they are objects of nature's desire and hope. Their usefulness and comfort deeply involve the honor and the welfare of a multitude that man cannot number; but their usefulness and comfort depend on their early adoption of those principles of piety and faith which God has revealed in his word, and which are to be urged by "precept upon precept and line upon line" from parental lips. And when parents are unable to do so personally, through defect of ability or the urgency of paramount duties, it is their privilege to do so through the kind offices of others; but for no reason whatever can they innocently fail to improve the spring time of life, for scattering over the rich field of infant mind committed to their charge, the seed that may spring up and bring forth fruit thirty, sixty, or an hundred fold, to the glory of God.

6. A failure in the discharge of parental obligations to children, imposes on others who fear God, the duty of teaching them knowledge. As the offspring of our Father in heaven they are immortal, and as children of disobedience they are exposed to death eternal.

Yet for them the blood of Calvary hath flowed, for them the Holy Spirit hath made known the purposes of eternal justice and mercy; and for them hath the church prayed in all generations, assured of the compassion of heaven towards them by the strong

language of the Saviour "Suffer little children to come unto me and forbid them not." But prayer, important as it is, is not the only office of Christian love owing to them, nor can it even satisfy the claims of benevolence upon those who owe all that is animating in their hopes and precious in their consolations to the sacrifice of the Lamb of God.

Too long has the Christian world slumbered while generation after generation has arisen, and sported in the sunshine of its brief day, and passed on to the darkness of eternal night. Either the connexion between prayer and labor has been ill understood, or the means by which the mass of youthful mind is to be brought under the influence of the gospel have been imperfectly apprehended. Not till century on century had passed away under the ever increasing light of the Sun of Righteousness, did it occur to a solitary mind, that thousands of neglected youth, with souls as precious as Gabriel's and as polluted as fallen Adam's, might be collected on the Sabbath from the streets and lanes of the city, and the farm-houses and workshops of the country, to learn the will of God, and prepare for usefulness and immortality; "a possibility this," says one, "which had never before been suspected; a disclosure as of some hidden power of nature." Scarcely had the brilliant thought been conceived, however, when it took wing and soared into mid-heaven, and displayed its beauty before all eyes, and, claiming a Divine origin, sent forth its notes of love in tones as sweet as those which filled the ears of Bethlehem's shepherds. The philanthropic spirit swelled with delighted emotion. The pious heart exulted in hope and joy. Meek-eyed charity now saw the redemption of the world drawing nigh, and, with outstretched hand, took the celestial visitant to her bosom, and blessed it with her smiles, and nourished it with "wine and milk, without money and without price." Already has it made the circuit of the world, and on all lands planted its foot, though not all tribes of men yet bid it welcome.

To the origin and progress of this lofty conception of sanctified mind, or its adaptedness to the pressing necessities of Zion and the world. this is neither the time nor the place to devote our attention. A passing allusion is all that is permitted; and if we add the conviction of its perfect harmony with the spirit that brought the Saviour from heaven to earth—that sent abroad the apostles to evangelize all nations—that still sustains the herald of salvation in his labors of love for dying men, and flings abroad, on every breeze, those leaves that are for the healing of the nations; and if to this we add the facts that millions on millions otherwise uninstructed, have already been taught the first principles of the oracles of God, and that thousands on thousands have embraced the faith of the gospel and learned to cherish the hope that maketh not ashamed; and that of these, hundreds have risen to stations of eminent use-

fulness, and now shine as lights in the world,—we have perhaps discharged our duty.

Yet of the fulness and glory of these results no adequate conception can be formed by any intelligence on this side of Heaven. To comprehend them in all their bearings on man's earthly interests alone, demands a reach of mind unknown to mortals; for until the extent to which they have resisted the encroachments of infidelity and licentiousness, expelled vile passions from the heart, palsied the arm of violence, abashed the face of crime, strengthened the bonds of friendship and love, promoted economy and enterprise, and insured fidelity in the discharge of relative and social duties can be ascertained from *heaven's* records, no man can conceive of them. And then, to comprehend them in their bearings on the destinies of *eternity*, or the happiness of redeemed myriads, or the joys of the angelic hosts over returning sinners, or the revenue of glory brought to man's Redeemer—and in the illustration of the matchless perfections of Jehovah—is far beyond the compass of any other than the Infinite mind.

Well may we felicitate ourselves on the kind Providence that has given us our birth at a period of the world's history, so auspicious to the movements of Christian benevolence, and cast our lines in the pleasant land where the common charities of life, and the workings of the noblest beneficence so harmoniously blend in bringing forth results, at once glorious to God and useful to man. The harp of heaven brought down to earth has a thousand strings that may all be touched by human hands, whose mingling vibrations swell the strain of "Glory to God in the highest, peace on earth, good will to men," and send a thrill of transport to the northern and the southern poles, the world around, while they awake the lyres of the upper world, and make the heavenly arches ring. Happy he who plays upon a single chord of that instrument to ears accustomed long to discordant sounds; and happier still is he who strikes string after string with practised art, in charming unison with the multitude who praise the Father, Son and Holy Ghost in earth and heaven, for HE wakes up a joy that shall circle the universe while eternity endures.

7. To insure these results, in their full extent, requires the merging of minor differences of opinion and feeling among Christians, in the broad stream of love flowing from the throne of God. The ultimate success of the holy enterprise demands it. The honor of Christ and the salvation of man demands it. "Neither pray I for these alone, but for them that believe on me through their word, that they all may be one, as thou Father art in me, and I in thee; that they also may be one in us." This prayer from lips that the Father heareth alway shall be answered; but while the answer is delayed, reproach falls on the Great Intercessor, and

the world rejects his claims. I say not that a perfect union of all the followers of Jesus in thought, word and deed, is possible in the present imperfect condition of their being—for

> ——————" Different minds
> Incline to different objects; one pursues
> The vast alone; the wonderful; the mild:
> Another sighs for harmony—and grace
> And gentlest beauty."

But I say that the fault is their own, if they see not, eye to eye, on the great points of Christian duty, and if they unite not their labors cordially to " teach the young knowledge and make them understand doctrine." Strange it is that those who have entered on " the way of life," and who severally admit their own imperfections, yet so indifferently bear with each other's infirmities, and contend so strenuously for " trifles light as air" in their respective creeds and measures; when, by their own admission, the world lieth in wickedness, and thousands every day rush ignorantly down into the abyss from which there is no deliverance; and when too they concede to each other the name and the spirit of Christ, and exult in the prospect of their future intercourse in a world of unmingled love and praise! Surely prejudice and jealousy and evil surmising and contention ill become them, while they profess to serve the same master, and execute the same commission, and cultivate the same spirit, and exemplify the same heaven-wrought character. Would that it were not known in Gath, nor published in the streets of Ascalon, that they sometimes forget their common parentage and brotherhood! But a brighter day is coming. The morning star hath appeared, standing over the birth place of the spirit that imitates the Great Shepherd's gathering the lambs in his arms, and carrying them in his bosom. Wise men behold it and admire. The unlearned and the ignorant fall down before it and adore. The mighty man and the honorable, the mean man and the weakling, together bring their gifts and lay them on the altar of this newborn child of heaven, and worship HIM who by the breath of his mouth, has called into being the SABBATH SCHOOL,—his own representative.

May there not be perfect union and co-operation here? Not another object within the reach of Christian enterprize combines more of simplicity and grandeur than that which promises to bring forth the infant intelligence of the age, from the lower and the higher walks of life, and conduct it along the paths of wisdom into the presence of the Ineffable Glory! And the means proposed for the accomplishment of the object are equally unostentatious and childlike as the object itself. There is instruction in the oracles of God by the living teacher, himself familiar with the habits of thought and action prevalent among his pupils; there is the sym-

pathy of kindred minds pursuing an object of acknowledged sublimity and worth; there is the general supervision of the pastor, or other officers of the church, and the daily ascending prayer of the faithful; and there is the richly replenished library, whence the scholar, the teacher and the parent, whether thoughtless or serious, prayerless or devout, may draw the weekly supply of wholesome instruction, such as the Spirit of God employs to fit the soul for heaven.

Of the efficiency of these means none can doubt. It is indicated by the principles of our common nature, by the teachings of Scripture, by the example of individual saints, and even by the zeal and perseverance with which the enemies of Christ employ a part of them for unhallowed purposes.

The wily magician neglects not his enchantments. The artful unbeliever sets his net to entrap the unwary, on the same ground and with the same carefulness as the man who aims at the salvation of the lost. As the dragon cast out of his mouth water, as a flood, after the woman, that he might cause her to be carried away, so does the same foul spirit, by the unholy and licentious issues of the press, aim to corrupt and destroy the Church of God, through its influence on the youthful generation of all lands. Shall the earth keep the woman still, and swallow up the flood that issues from the dragon's mouth? Then must the friends of Jesus husband their resources, concentrate their energies, and pour the full tide of their influence in one broad and deep stream through a sanctified press, on the whole breadth of the earth.

Such union and concentration alone can secure the object in their eye. And surely they will not suffer millions of the lambs of the flock to wander from mountain to hill, shelterless and hungry, amid poisonous shrubs and beasts of prey, when by due economy of their means, they may provide folds and pasturage for them all—or to change the figure—throw over them a shield, broad as heaven, for their protection, and secure their retreat within the arms of the great Shepherd of Israel.

Proverbially true is it that "two are better than one." Equally true is it of the individual, and the religious denomination. Isolated efforts, put forth with the greatest elevation and purity of purpose, can reach but a small portion of the youthful population of our country; for denominational lines that divide the parents divide the children also; and the prejudice or indifference which operate against the ministers or the church of a rival sect, operate equally against the teacher, and the library of that sect; and then pecuniary support fails. Faith languishes. Love degenerates into sectarian favoritism. Zeal for God gives way to zeal for party peculiarities; and every resource on which reliance is placed for the support of the Sabbath school is soon exhausted, and it sinks into annihilation by its own weight. But let evangelical denominations lay out of

sight their differences, on points that involve not the essential truths of Christianity, and take hold with one heart and a strong hand on the Godlike enterprise of rearing up a whole generation to know the Lord, and a moral energy shall be evolved, in the progress of their labors, adequate to shaking the empire of ignorance and sin to its foundations, and diffusing the light and knowledge of heaven over its whole extent.

The means appointed by Providence for the conversion of the world, form but one beautiful and harmonious system, combined in all its parts with wondrous skill. It has wheels upon wheels, rings upon rings, high and awful, full of eyes round about, and ever moving as the living spirit moves, with no other friction than human infirmity creates. As the result of the successive revolutions of this stupendous moral machinery the world is supplied with the Holy Scriptures, with the living preachers of righteousness, and the ministration of Divine ordinances; with the almoners of Christian charity, tract distributors, and Sabbath school teachers, who gather around them neglected infant crowds, and inspire them to shout Hosanna to the Son of David. Variety and harmony of means, is the law of Providence. Order out of confusion is its end. Even human imperfection is constrained to co-operate with heaven's wisdom, in bringing about the grand result of concord and good will throughout the intelligent universe. And what I affirm is, that it is man's privilege and honor to follow the line of providential dispensation instead of vainly attempting to cross it.

If there be variety in the opinions and feelings of Zion's friends on subordinate points of duty, yet let there be harmony of action on other points of admitted magnitude, to which the spirit of love directs their eyes, as points of glorious attainment. And though confusion of thought and of language, on inferior questions may arise, (which no preciseness of definition nor fervor of piety will at once remove,) yet whoever follows on to know the will of God shall draw, even from that confusion, order and triumph.

We all love the country that gave us birth; the laws that protect our lives and property; the institutions that expand our minds, warm our affections, give success to our enterprises, and heaven to our hopes; but this country and these blessings had never been ours had not the Spirit of Christ, moving on the hearts of our fathers, constrained them to merge individual differences in the one great object of securing to themselves and posterity, the sacred rights denied them in the land of their birth. Few in number, poor in treasure, and lightly esteemed by the wise and the mighty, UNION was their strength; and from it sprung the temples, the schools, the colleges, and the senate chambers, that have nourished the spirit of benevolence, and created the thousand voluntary associations which now adorn the land and bless the world. Let the same bond of perfectness connect the sons of God of every name

among their descendants, in reference to the object before us this evening and all kindred objects, and shortly the blessings of Sabbath school instruction shall be as widely diffused as are the beams of the sun, and the showers of heaven, that clothe alike with verdure and beauty the hill-top and the vale.

8. In this view we contemplate with admiration and gratitude the principles, and the spirit of the AMERICAN SUNDAY SCHOOL UNION. Without affirming its exemption from imperfections common to all benevolent associations, conducted by fallible and sinful men, we venture to claim for it a combination of so much that is divine in principle, comprehensive and effective in movement, pure and elevated in spirit, as justly challenges universal confidence and support. What are its objects but to concentrate the efforts of Sabbath school societies and their friends throughout the land, on principles of common sympathy and advantage, bringing them to bear most efficiently on the instruction of the whole rising generation; to disclose and mature the best possible system of instruction, and prepare the most acceptable manuals for the use of teachers and learners; to diffuse information to the widest extent, by means of missionaries, agents and periodicals; to circulate as extensively as possible, books in great variety, decidedly evangelical in their spirit, and healthful in their tendencies; and then to establish Sabbath schools, with all their happy influences, wherever is found a population wending its way to the bar of God. Thus are harmony of counsel, and effectiveness of action, strength of purpose and intrepidity of zeal, to be secured among the friends of the Sabbath, and the religious education of youth, while all classes of men shall be enlightened and improved. And I hesitate not to say, that I am yet ignorant of the institution which operates at once so silently and with equal power to bring about the great moral revolution of our country, for which every patriotic heart, and every tongue of hallowed fire, send forth their devoutest aspirations.

Happy were it for Zion were the objects of the "Union" better understood, and its principles more justly appreciated, for its means and its results could not then fail of indefinite enlargement. Certain it is that its claims on Christian patronage are not adequately met, either through ignorance of its far reaching and Divine philosophy or through the short lived triumph of unworthy jealousies over the clearest evidence of its practical utility.

Does it aim at private or inferior ends? The character of its founders,—ever foremost among the liberal supporters of every branch of benevolent enterprise; the good it has accomplished, and thrown open to the cognizance of all; the testimony of thousands of living Sabbath Schools, and of tens of thousands of its

past beneficiaries, still toiling on earth or swelling the songs of Heaven—answer—No!

Does it claim a disproportionate share of public munificence? It asks nothing beyond the promptings of clear-sighted benevolence, in view of the Saviour's command, "Freely ye have received, freely give," and expects to be judged, in all simplicity, by its fruits and patronised with cheerfulness and constancy only according to its tested merits.

Does it indulge in extravagant expenditures? Tell us when? Tell us where? If its means are restricted it lives and prospers within them. It holds fast to a strict accountability, and submits each item of expense to public scrutiny, without fear or censure. What means it has it uses to the best advantage without meanness; and asks the services of no man without making his bread and water sure. Is this extravagance?

Does it seek independence of public patronage? That patronage is its life; without it the corse from which the spirit has fled is not more cold and motionless; nor till the heart shall say to the blood, I have no need of thee, and the head to the members, I have no need of you, will this institution say to the public, by word or deed, 'your favor is not needful to us.' It maintains, indeed, the elevated and independent course of movement demanded by its responsibilities to God, and its relations to humanity and Zion, otherwise it forfeits the meed of public confidence; and it betrays the great interests committed to its care, if it be disgraced by servility to individual prejudice or popular caprice.

Does it interfere with denominational rights and privileges? So far from it, it co-operates with every evangelical denomination in the diffusion of knowledge and love; nor throws it the slightest impediment in the way of any who are urged by conscience to extend the influence of their peculiarities of faith. Strongly planted itself in the broad platform of our common Christianity, it denies not its hope ultimately to gather into one all things in Christ, inspiring everywhere mutual confidence and love among brethren; and stimulating effort to fulfill the Saviour's great commission, while it holds its peace on every subject of sectarian strife. Knowing nothing but Christ and him crucified, the tendency of all its movements is doubtless to weaken partizan sympathies, to diminish jealous rivalries, and to quench the unhallowed fires of Shibboleth animosities.

Does it trench on the duties of pastors and parents? On the contrary it enforces, in the most persuasive manner, the purest instructions of the pulpit and the fireside. The Sabbath School is the nursery in which the tender plants committed to the care of the spiritual husbandman, are trained by other hands, under his own supervision, till strong enough for removal to more spacious fields; where, unharmed by scorching heat or blasting cold, they

may bring forth pleasant fruits, till the time arrives for their transplantation to the paradise above. And, so far from diminishing the amount of parental duty, it but facilitates the discharge of it; rebukes supineness, and repeats in the parent's ear, as each holy day returns, the divine injunction "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with all thy might," reminding him that he has fellow-laborers in the great work of preparing his offspring for the skies, raised up by heaven to supply the lack of service over which he often weeps in bitterness of spirit.

And in this connexion it may not be impertinent to remark that the efficiency of the "Union," under God, wholly depends upon the support it derives from the ministry and the churches. At their word it lives, and at their frown it dies. Let them be zealously affected toward it, and it flourishes like the palm tree, though buffeted by all the winds of heaven let loose; let them be indifferent to its prosperity and regardless of its calls on their aid, and it droops like the uprooted flower of the garden. It is the offspring of faith, and sympathises in all the weaknesses of its parent. It is the adopted child of charity, and shares the benedictions and reproaches poured on the head of its foster-mother. It is the fair creation of Providence starting forth on its career of Godlike beneficence, amid the shoutings of attendant angels, and doomed to blight and desolation only when Satan wakes and its heaven-appointed guardians sleep. It is an infant Moses, destined by high decree to usefulness and honor, but cradled for a season in the ark of bulrushes, till a heaven-directed hand plucks it forth from danger and commits it to Zion's maternal care with the charge "take this child and nurse it for me, and I will pay thee thy wages." Live it must—live it will, as certainly as did Israel's deliverer, unless we misinterpret the promises of revelation, and the indications of Providence relative to the day in which

> "One song employs all nations; and all cry
> Worthy the Lamb, for he was slain for us."

And if it live not by the instrumentality of the ministry and churches already existing, then will God raise up a holier ministry and purer churches who shall press it to their breasts, and bear it on their arms, and save it harmless from the archers that sorely grieve it; and make its bow abide in strength, and gather around it the blessings of heaven above, and of the deep beneath, blessings reaching to the utmost bounds of the everlasting hills.

My brethren, we have before us the object of restoring to purity and love a lost race, for which heaven has poured forth its richest treasures, and to secure the widest manifestation of that glory which fills the upper world with transports of joy. It is an object before which the material universe sinks into insignificance; defying our utmost powers of comprehension, but demanding our

utmost zeal and unremitted effort. Among the various instrumentalities devised by the providence of God for securing it, none is more simple, direct, or effective, than the seizure of the mass of youthful mind by the strong arm of Christian love, and binding it by a chain of light to the throne of the Eternal, ere it shall have been caught up by the demons of the pit, and thrown into the prison house whence there is no escape.

Both the object and the instrumentality are too vast to be grasped at once. We begin at our firesides, and then gather in the children of our neighbors, and then extend our influence over other communities, until thousands and tens of thousands are brought within the reach of instruction and trained up for heaven's employments. I say, for heaven's employments! What, my brethren, is heaven itself but an everlasting Sabbath in the presence chamber of God, where are congregated myriads, out of every nation, kindred, tongue, and language, ever learning more and more of the wonders of infinite intelligence and love. And is it fancy that sees in angels who excel in wisdom, the appointed teachers of the uncounted multitudes, and in the Word who in the beginning was with God and is God, the superintending energy, regulating each movement of the teacher and the taught; and in the books penned by the recording angel, the exhaustless library of Divine knowledge, read with intense and ever growing interest while eternity endures? O, it is not fancy. Heaven is the great Sabbath School of the universe, of which our own are the imperfect "patterns," and in which the lofty exercises never weary, and never end!

But for a moment limit your views to your own country, embracing already nearly twenty millions of undying men; bone of your bone and flesh of your flesh; occupying two millions of miles of territory, exceeded by none in its capabilities of sustaining a dense population, nor in facilities for the accumulation of wealth; and equalled by none in the rapid increase of its deathless energies, the nobleness of its institutions, the equity of its laws, the liberality of its government, and its influence on the destinies of the world, when a little more than fifty years shall have augmented our numbers to an hundred millions. It is a question of thrilling interest—what shall be the character and the circumstances of these swarming multitudes?

It is neither presumptuous nor unkind to affirm, that half our present population are denied the ministrations of the gospel in its purity, either by the minister of the sanctuary, the Sabbath School teacher, or the page of inspired truth. And the proportion of the uninstructed will inevitably and vastly increase, without earnest and self-sacrificing labor on the part of the patriot and the Christian. For we have, in the midst of us, Sectarianism in multiplied and revolting forms of ignorance and delusion; Romanism with its sycophantic lips, and ironbound soul; Infidelity with serpents en-

twined about its head and eyes that turn men into stones; Atheism with its hundred hands of violence, and its fifty mouths of blasphemy; vice, crime and reckless passions threatening a deluge of blood and fire—and all accumulating new power every day by the influx from the emptied alms-houses, brothels, and prisons of Europe. These enemies of God and our country are to be met and vanquished on the open field, or within their fortified entrenchments, only by spiritual weapons.

Nor are they to be foiled and overthrown by our fears or our hopes, nor by our boasting and defiances. Dangers encompass us. A dark abyss yawns at our feet. The heavens lower above us. The elements meet in conflict around us, and unless the Lord be on our side we are swallowed up quick. But safety may be found. It is announced to us in heaven's gentle whisper, "this is the way, walk ye in it." "Teach your CHILDREN and make them understand doctrine." Bid the herald of salvation, and the Sabbath School teacher go hand in hand throughout the land; their doctrine dropping as the rain, and their speech distilling as the dew, and future generations shall arise and become a wall of fire around the dwelling-place of Jehovah, and a glory in the midst of it.

I have alluded to the prospective influence going forth from us to affect the destinies of the world. Already there is scarcely a land so remote, or a clime so inhospitable, or a tribe of men so small, that our name has not reached it, and awakened a spirit of inquiry into the genius of our religious and civil institutions. Every year, as it extends our commerce, and increases our wealth, extends our fame, and nourishes a spirit in other lands, that will never rest till the blood-stained sword of despotism is everywhere broken, and dark-faced ignorance banished to the realms of its foster father—the prince of darkness. Let our population continue to swell as for the hundred years past, and our intercourse with the nations to be maintained and increased, our literature and science to keep pace with our agricultural and mechanical improvements, and not an angel's tongue can tell the amount of that influence an hundred years hence. The question is, shall it be an influence baptized in the fountain opened on Calvary; and go forth armed with the authority of the law of God, rearing the sanctuary, disseminating the word of life, planting the Sabbath school, diffusing light and love at each advancing step, and spreading abroad the glories of the millennial day over a benighted world? Or, on the other hand, shall it go forth under the control of the spirit of unbelief, and insubordination to the laws of God and man; embroiling kingdoms in war and bloodshed; harpy-like, first tearing in pieces and then polluting and devouring whatever is noble and lovely in the privileges and joys of the great community of nations? The question awaits the calm decision of the philanthropist and the Christian.

Brethren! the work before you is nothing less than to bring your whole country into cheerful subjection to Christ, making it the glory of all lands, by converting it into a mountain of holiness, from whose summit shall descend perennial streams of richest blessing to purify the nations, till "the voice of a great multitude, as the voice of many waters and the voice of mighty thunderings, shall be heard saying, Alleluia! for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth, and the kingdom and the dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, are given to the people of the saints of the Most High."

A SHORT SERMON.

EARLY CONVERSION OF CHILDREN.

"I love them that love me; and those that seek me early shall find me."—Prov. viii. 17.

The early conversion of children is of unspeakable importance. In the view of christian parents, who are alive to the worth of the soul, the thought that their children to whom they have given birth shall live and die in their sins, and be for ever excluded from heaven is a reflection, which is unutterably painful. And in view of the promises which cluster around the period of childhood the wonder is that any christian parents can remain satisfied or indifferent for a single day till their children are converted to God. If they believe these promises of the Bible, and would come to God in humble reliance on his spirit and put his faithfulness to the test, by earnest supplication, who can tell how many christian parents would rejoice in the early conversion of their children.

The following are some of the considerations which show the importance of the early conversion of children.

1. 'If conversions take place early, *less time will be spent in the service of the world, and, consequently, the power of the adversary will be proportionably diminished.* There are two great powers striving for the ascendency in this world,—Christ and Satan, with their respective followers. The followers of Christ are those who are won from the ranks of Satan. Formerly they have been suffered to remain there till the best part of their lives have been spent in opposing the advance of holiness. Now, if they can be won over to the side of Christ ten or fifteen years earlier, so much will be subtracted from the power of the adversary.

2. But not only is the power of Satan lessened by early conversions, that of Christ's cause is to the same extent increased. Instead of giving ten or twenty years to the service of Christ, you give thirty, forty, or fifty. Thus the cause of holiness gains a double advantage. If, in war, a hundred of the enemy fall in battle while we lose nothing, we have gained an advantage. But how much greater is the acquisition if, instead of falling, they desert and come over to our side!

3. Again those who are converted in early childhood *will do less injury to the canse of their Master when they engage in the active business of life*, than if their converson were delayed till they arrive at adult years. There are few christians who do not often find reason to mourn over injuries done to the cause of Christ by the manner of their lives. Of many christians it may without doubt be said with truth to their death, " they have done more hurt than good." This arises very much, if not chiefly, from injurious habits formed and established while in impenitence. One had the habit of covetousness firmly established before conversion, and now it is his besetting sin. The world look on and exclaim, " There is one of your professors of religion, as close-fisted as any man on earth." Thus his habit is made the occasion of their stumbliug and destruction, and dishonors Christ. Another christian is the subject of some other bad habit which gives offence. But let conversions take place in childhood, and let the habits be formed after the christian model, and these injurious effects will not be seen.

4. *The amount of good performed during any given portion of life will be greater in proportion as conversions take place earlier.* Not only will the *time* for doing good be increased by early conversions, but the *power* of doing good will also be augmented. *Good* habits occupy the ground which otherwise would have been occupied by *evil* habits. But this consideration is of little importance compared with the *increase of holiness* which will thus be secured.

5. Another thing which renders early conversions of great importance to the cause of Christ is the fact, that thus *opportunity is afforded the christian of choosing and preparing himself for that employment in which he can do the most good.* How many christians who commenced living for Christ after they were settled in life, are now bitterly lamenting the necessity of spending the remainder of their days in a business which they would not have chosen had they become pious earlier. Many, whose natural talents are such as would lay the foundation for eminent usefulness in the ministry, are plodding along in an employment unfavorable to the exercise of extensive influence, because they chose their occupation without reference to the will of Christ, and entered upon his service when it was too late to change. How many churches that are now destitute of one to break to them the bread of life, might have been enjoying the regular ministrations of pious pastors! How many that are bowing down to idols might have now been singing he praises of the Lamb had early conversions been common in the last generation!

6. The early conversion of the children of pious parents is important, because, *the anxiety of the parents for their children will thus be lessened*, and consequently they will be able to devote more of their thoughts and strength to efforts for the conversion of others. How much is the usefulness of christian parents impaired by those consuming cares and anxieties which are preying upon their hearts, in view of the dangers to which their unconverted children are exposed! And how mueh more efficient might they be in the service of Christ, could they put forth their desires and efforts for the salvation of those areund them, unencumbered by the sad reflection, that their own children are still out of the ark of safety!

7. The last consideration we present as a motive to effort for the conversion of children is, that *in this way* ONLY *can the full effect of christian family example be brought to bear upon the impenitent morld.* The example of an *individual* is powerful, but how much more powerful is that of a *family*. But what becomes of the family influence where the children grow up in impenitence and remain unconverted till they go out from under the parental roof? It is impossible so to train up a family in impenitence that the conduct of the children shall not, to a greater or less extent, prove a stumbling block to the world. An ungodly parent witnesses the vicious practices of the children of christians, and does not see but his children are as well governed and obedient as theirs. Oh! it is enough to cause the truly pious heart to bleed to think of the injury which religion sustains from the scandalous conduct of the children of pious parents. And all this because they are unconverted. They neither do good themselves nor allow their parents to do it.

In view of these considerations we ask christian parents, can you look upon yourselves as faithful to your Master while you are not earnestly seeking the early conversion of your children? Would you have a large portion of the time and influence of your children rescued from the service of the devil and consecrated to Christ,—would you see them engaging in those employments in which they can do most for their Saviour,—would you be free yourselves from anxious forbodings in reference to your children, and thus be able to engage with a cheerful heart in doing good,—especially, would you have the example of your family, while under the parental roof, tell on the side of Christ,—do you earnestly desire these things? Then surely you will not spare any effort which promises to prove effectual in bringing them into the fold of the good Shepherd.'

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A REVIVAL OF RELIGION, GOD'S WORK.

"It is time for thee, Lord, to work, for they have made void thy law."—PSALM cix. 126.

THIS remarkable psalm contains a full expression of christian sentiment on a variety of important subjects. The most prominent thought contained in it, presented under various aspects, is the unspeakable excellence of the divine law. David's piety appeared in the deep interest he felt for the honour of this law, for he was tremblingly alive to every violation. His were no ordinary feelings, *rivers of waters run down mine eyes because men keep not thy law;* while his love in all its freshness and strength centered upon its glorious Author, his tears flowed for the sins of the people. The prevalence of iniquity filled him with solicitude for the cause of God, for when iniquity abounds the love of many waxes cold. Despairing of help from man he turns to God. In the text there is a *fact* stated by way of complaint, *they have made void thy law;* and a desire expressed that God would arise in his glory and put forth his power for the vindication of his honour. Or, it may be simply a declaration;—if so, it might be understood as referring to a work of judgment in which the violators of the law would be punished. But it is generally supposed to relate to a work of mercy in converting sinners from the error of their ways. Then it would teach us this sentiment, *that the work of God often commences in a time of great declension.*

It is thus explained by the Assembly of Divines, "the prophet sheweth, that when the wicked have brought all things to confusion

and God's word to utter contempt, then it is God's time to help and send remedy." We shall keep this sentiment in view in illustrating the text.

I. *When do men make void God's law?*

It is obvious the Psalmist refers to a period of more than ordinary sinfulness. There was something in the tone of public sentiment, in the state of public morals, which peculiarly affected him and led him to present the case to God. Such a state of things is thus described by the prophet. *None calleth for justice, nor any pleaded for truth. Judgment is turned away backward, and justice standeth afar off; for truth is fallen in the street, and equity cannot enter.*

To make void, is virtually to annul, to destroy the force of, to render ineffectual. It is an expression that usually has reference to an act passed, or to an instrument containing the terms of a contract.

1. To make void the law of God is *to deny its authority and obligation.*

The divine law is a transcript of the divine character and is an expression of the will of its Author. It was written by the finger of God. They who reject the Scriptures as a revelation from God, make void the law. There are those who acknowledge its excellency and reasonableness, who even admit its authenticity, and still deny its divine authority. It is not merely because it secures the interests of civil society, nor yet because it defines the rights and protects the property of men in their various relations that it is called good, but because it is the standard and the instrument of holiness; all those who make light of the penalty, who do not tremble at the divine word, make void the law.

2. *To obscure or explain away its meaning*, is to make void the law. There are those who do not assail the authority, who, nevertheless neutralize the force, of the law. They put a false construction upon it. This includes all errorists. There is a true interpretation. The law was given to be obeyed, of course to be understood. The exercise of unbiassed reason, with the aid of the lights of history and the former experience of others, together with fervent prayer, and above all the teaching of the Spirit, will lead to the true meaning. *If any man will do the will of God, he shall know of the doctrine.* The decisions of the judgment are greatly influenced by the state of the heart. The common refuge of error that the powers of the human mind are limited, will be swept away. The limitation of reason, may be the cause of imperfect views, but cannot be an excuse for erroneous views. Error is more the sin of the heart, than the fault of the head. A right heart will find the truth.

The Bible is made up of doctrines, of prohibitions, and of precepts; all of which are enforced by penalties. As a love for the truth, and a right state of feeling will lead to a discovery and approval of the truth; so an unhumbled heart will dispose one to pervert the right ways of the Lord. Hence it will be found true that a man who has fallen into one error, is wrong on other points. If we may put our own construction on one part of the Bible, we may on another, and thus it will be made to speak according to fancy, or prejudice, or selfishness, and we shall not be held by its claims, nor awed by its penalties. Large portions of nominal Christendom make the law void. Its true spiritual meaning is obscured, its direct influence weakened.

3. There are some who make void the law by *traditions*. This was true of the Jews in Christ's time. Addressing the scribes and Pharisees, who laid great stress upon the traditions of the Elders, the Saviour says, "*ye have made the commandment of God of none effect, by your traditions.*

Nor was this method of setting aside the law confined to the Scribes and Pharisees. It has prevailed extensively in the Romish Church. Nor there only. Human authority is often set up against divine. Not unfrequently do error and immorality find countenance in opinions expressed by commentators and church courts. Many sentiments have gained currency, which weaken moral obligation, and neutralize divine truth.

When the authority of the Bible is let down, the public conscience will sleep, the love of many who profess godliness will wax cold, religion will exert but a feeble influence on those without, places of amusement will be frequented, the passions will seek indulgence, the young will be impatient of restraint, daring impiety will abound, men will cast off fear, and restrain prayer, profaneness, intemperance and sabbath-breaking will become frequent and open. An apathy which neither judgments nor mercies break up, settles upon the public mind; the ministrations of the gospel are ineffectual, the feasts of Zion are deserted, while haunts of sin and halls of mirth are thronged.

II. *The only hope of the Church, at such a time, is in God. It is time for* THEE, *Lord, to work*

The *minister* is often discouraged. The church has declined in spite of all his prayers and exertions. Notwithstanding his ministrations, iniquity has increased; while he has stretched out his hand no man regarded; as he surveys the wide desolation, the prevalance of error, the rush into sin, the recklessness of the young, the idolatry of the world, knowing the inveteracy of habit, the unbelief of the heart, the artifice of Satan, he is ready to despond. He is often tempted to ask, *can these dry bones live?* He has

been taught his own insufficiency. The word preached does not profit. There is neither a hearing ear, nor an understanding heart.

Those associated with him as officers in the church are inoperative; have gradually lost their interest in the welfare of Zion, they have been diverted from their appropriate work, and transferred their zeal and activity to the business of the world. They are often absent from the place of prayer, they do not mourn because the feasts of the church are deserted. They yield to apathy and unbelief.

The body of the church are lukewarm. All hands hang down. Amidst the reign of selfishness, all seek their own, and not the things which are Jesus Christ's. Affecting appeals produce only a temporary effect. The tares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and it becomes unprofitable. The bleakness and the barrenness of winter, are a fit emblem of the spiritual state of such a church.

Is it not evident, therefore, if anything is done, *God must take the work into his own hands.* "Man's extremity, is God's opportunity."

The resuscitation of nature, after the desolation of winter, is not more the work of God, than the quickening of the graces of his people, after a season of declension.

Here it may be proper to mention, How *God works.*

I. *By means of his Providence.* A sudden death has often proved the occasion of deep seriousness to a circle of friends. A good work has sometimes commenced in colleges by the death of a young man. A visitation of sickness, not unfrequently is the means of convincing men of the need of a Saviour. A public calamity has impressed a whole community with a sense of sin. In this way the general apathy has been broken up, attention has been turned to the things of religion, and multitudes have been converted from the error of their ways.

2. Sometimes the work of God is revived by *unexpected means.* A gross offender, a bold blasphemer, or an open opposer of religion is converted. The suddenness and magnitude of the change convince many of the great power of God; they see it, and fear. The moment men begin to reflect, to bring home the subject of personal obligation to their own hearts, they would find enough in every day's occurrence, to impress the conscience with a sense of guilt.

The prostration of one lofty oak betokens the presence of a strong wind, and others in the vicinity will be shaken. Often does God take this method to awaken the stout-hearted, and to arouse his

church. Sometimes a revival of religion begins by the quickening of some humble member of the church, while the great body are indifferent. Whenever we see one possessed of a spirit of prayer or deeply affected by the exposure of sinners out of Christ, if there be any tenderness left in our hearts, or any regard for the welfare of Zion, some interest will be awakened, some compunction will be felt.

More frequently, perhaps, the good work commences in consequence of a powerful sermon, accompanied by the energy of the Holy Spirit, or by means of a system of pastoral visitation.

Although the wind bloweth where it listeth, still we find there is some degree of order in the operations of the Spirit; it is important therefore to observe the ordinary means which are blessed of God to the promotion of his work.

III. We proceed to the main point of this discourse, that *God often interposes and begins his work*, at such a time, *when men make void his law.*

We might expect that *judgment* would begin, since the wrath of God is revealed fron heaven against all unrighteousness of men. But instead of wrath he remembers mercy. We refer to some facts. We have an illustration in *the reformation under Asa.* After the separaton of the ten tribes, Judah, instead of trusting in the Lord they fell away to idolatry. Altars were erected to strange gods, groves were planted, and all the abominations of the heathen were committed. As a natural consequence every species of immorality was practised. In the midst of this darkness and declension, Asa was raised up, who, in opposition to the course of his father, removed the offensive rites of the heathen and restored the worship of the true God. The great change that was effected under Josiah commenced at a time of peculiar degeneracy. The nation appeared to be on the verge of ruin. The temple was desecrated, the worship of God wholly neglected—the law was lost, the priests were corrupt; at the lowest point of declension, a copy of the law was found amid the rubbish with which the temple was defiled. The reading of this book awakened the conscience of the pious king; he collected all the people and caused them to enter into covenant to repent of their sins and seek the God of Israel. "*And Josiah took away all the abominations out of all the countries that pertained to the children of Israel, and made all that were present in Israel to serve, even to serve the Lord their God.*"

The reformation under Ezra commenced at a time of deep declension; and when did the Jewish church exhibit greater laxity of sentiment, or looseness of morals, than at the season of Pentecost, when so many thousands in Jerusalem were converted to God? At the period of the Reformation from Popery, profligacy

of manners had reached the highest pitch, the most flagrant sins were committed under sanction of the church.

The same is true of the second great reformation under Wesley and Whitfield in England, Edwards and Tennant in America. Religion had deeply declined and iniquity prevailed. The few pious that were left mourned in secret places. Those who lifted a warning voice and attempted to break up the slumbers of Zion, experienced the most determined opposition. In all these instances light emerged out of darkness, order sprung out of confusion.

It is interesting to inquire, *why* God begins to work at such a time? The fact is undoubted.

1. To show that it *is the work of God.* Revivals of religion are often attributed to *human agency.* It cannot be doubted that many movements in the church, misnamed revivals of religion, are the result of human effort: nor are we to forget that by the foolishness of preaching men are made wise unto salvation.

That a true revival is not the work of man, is evident from the fact, that under human agency it declines. How often when the still small voice begins to awaken the conscience, and sinners begin to inquire what thy must do to be saved, has some zealous but unwise hand been put forth to carry forward the work, some new methods have been devised, some new channels have been opened in which the increasing feeling might flow! mistaking the effect of novelty for the legitimate work of the Spirit, it was supposed the cause prospered, when in fact the work was marred.

Besides, how frequently are those professing christians who subsequently are aroused, and become useful, compelled to say, "*The Lord was in this place, and we knew it not.*" If those who are represented as the agents of this work, its active executors, find themselves unexpectedly in the midst of thrilling scenes, it is evedently not the work of man. *It is not by might nor by power*, not by human policy or strength, *but by the Spirit of God*, the church is built up.

Revivals of religion have been ascribed to the influence of *sympathy.* It is a sufficient answer to say that sympathy never kindles by coldness. While it is equally unphilosophical and unscriptural to exclude all feeling from religion, it is true, that mere feeling is not religion; and some of those excitements which have been called revivals are not to be regarded as specimens of what we denominate the work of God.

Many ascribe revivals of religion to *enthusiasm.* Enthusiasm, as now used, is a vague word. The real enthusiast is carried away with a conceit that he is in a measure inspired. His imagination is heated, he places undue value on circumstantials, while the main subject of interest is comparatively neglected. A revival of religion sometimes leads men of ardent temperament into enthusiasm, but how can such a state of mind be awakened by a valley of dry

bones, by anything in a community where men make void God's law?

When enthusiasm is chastened and sanctified it is a noble feeling springing from right and sober views of truth and the relation of things.

While some ascribe these precious seasons to one cause, and some to another, (for there are always many surmises, and as we know, many objections and misrepresentations,) we may answer them all in the language of the Apostle Peter. But this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel: "And it shall come to pass in the last days," (saith God,) "I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh.

2. God begins to work at such a time, *to prevent the boasting of man.*

The true and proper effect of all success in the cause of God, is to humble us. Pride is natural to man. How ready are even the pious to feel some self-complacency in a revival of religion. The instruments employed to promote it are praised; the numbers are magnified, the results are heralded forth; in all which we have evidence enough of human weakness. This vaunting spirit the Apostle rebuked, *who then is Paul, and who is Apollos,* but *ministers,* mere instruments, *by whom ye believed.*

God is a jealous God, he begins and carries on his work in a way to stain the pride of the heart; in its commencement, in the selection of the means, it is manifest he designs that no flesh should glory in his presence.

Many are brought into the kingdom on whom man has expended all his power to no purpose. When early instruction failed, when reason and argument were ineffectual, by some humble instrumentality they were made to feel their guilt and danger. Some are arrested in the very depths of wickedness; having broken through every restraint, resisted every impulse, and plunged into every excess, while no human arm could reach their case, they are pricked in the heart, and led to ask, *what shall we do?*

Standing in the midst of such scenes, surrounded by such miracles of grace, how natural to exclaim, behold, *what hath God wrought!* Both the minister and the convert have occasion to say —"Not unto us, not unto us, O Lord, but unto thy name be all the glory, for thy mercy and for thy truth's sake."

The text may be regarded in the light of a prayer, it expresses the *desire* of David, and therefore suggests another interesting enquiry.

Why is it specially *desirable* that God should *begin* to work *when men make void his law?*

1. *To put a stop to sin, to arrest the tide of iniquity.* As we

have remarked, when men make void God's law, iniquity comes in like a flood, *then*, if ever, it is desirable that the Spirit of the Lord should lift up a standard against it. What a panic is felt, what a terror is struck through the ranks of the enemies of truth, when God's people begin to bestir themselves, when penitent for their sins, and exercising faith in the promises, they stir themselves up to take hold of the covenant. When the Spirit of God begins to pervade a place, arresting the thoughtless, filling the church with light and holiness, the bold trangressor begins to tremble the wicked forsake the haunts of sin, the profane suppress their oaths, sabbath-breakers cease from their profanation of the holy day. Is it an evil and bitter thing to forsake the Lord ? Is the prevalence of sin a calamity to be deprecated ? Does sin destroy soul and body ? Surely then it is desirable that the tide of death should be stopped ; and nothing will so effectually stop it, as an outpouring of the Spirit.

Could all the crimes committed, the riotous scenes now existing in this place, the oaths and imprecations, the intemperance and sabbath-breaking, the levity and folly, be spread out before you ; could you like the prophet have a view of the abominations wrought in the midst of us, would you not in tears exclaim, Is it *not* time for thee, Lord, to work ? What will become of thy great name ?

2. It is desirable for God to *begin* to work *at such a time to vindicate the law.* When it is made void, its honour is in the dust its authority is prostrated. In a revival of religion the law is vindicated in two ways,—by those who are *converted*, and by the *testimony of conscience in those not converted.*

By the law is the knowledge of sin. When the Spirit of God moves upon the heart, the awakened sinner begins to think on his ways, he reviews his life, his memory is quickened, all the things he has ever done rise up before him ; he flies to the law, but it speaks in tones of condemnation, he trembles in view of its penalty smiting on his breast, he cries "God be merciful to me a sinner." He feels that the law is holy, and the commandment is holy, but he is carnal, sold under sin. The law has gained its rightful ascendency—and never again can he deny or doubt its authority.

And in relation to multitudes who never profess their attachment to Christ, who stand aloof from the Church, a revival has affected them ; they have secretly trembled, the law has been brought home to the conscience, and though not humbled, still prone to evil and unwilling to break off their sins by righteousness, they never afterwards indulge in many former sins. Conscience has been enlightened if not purified; the heart has been moved, if not subdued; the law has been honoured, if not obeyed ; good therefore was done not only by bringing sinners to Christ, but by restraining others from sin.

3. *For the manifestation of the divine glory.* "Man's extremity is God's opportunity." The deeper the darkness, the more light is required to dissipate it. If the law is in the dust, and iniquity abounds, if apathy and formality pervade the church, and everything wear the aspect of gloom and desolation, the *power* and *wisdom* and *grace* of God are peculiarly manifest in raising up the decayed foundations, in quickening the conscience, in bringing men to repentance. When we see the rigour of winter dissolving, the earth which had been desolate and frost-bound, teeming with life, the verdure of spring take the place of barrenness, we are filled with admiration of the grandeur and greatness of the Author of Nature. So when we witness the transformation of moral character, consequent upon a work of grace, see men who were possessed of every evil spirit, vile, licentious, abominable, clothed in their right minds, pure, teachable, obedient, benevolent, we are still more affected by the display of power and grace. A regard for the divine honour, no less than a spirit of benevolence, would lead us to desire a revival of pure and undefiled religion.

4. Nor should we overlook *the interest of the Church.*

When men make void God's law, it is evidence of the low state of religion in the church. If there is gross wickedness without, there is criminality within; if in one community iniquity abounds in the other there must be much that is wrong. Hence we find in seasons of declension, jealousies exist, divisions take place, selfishness triumphs, Zion languishes; the current of evil sets in deep and strong; nothing can save a church thus fallen into sin but a revival of religion; nothing else will heal the divisions and sooth the jealousies, nothing else will dissipate the despondency, and render effectual the efforts of the pious.

Jesus promised his Spirit to the Church, as the *sum* of all his blessings; the promise of the Father is the crowning gift. Who can enumerate *all* the benefits of an outpouring of the Spirit? It is to the church what the warmth of the Sun and the influence of the showers are to the earth. Its value is learned in two ways, by receiving, and by being deprived of it. A church that has been visited with a season of refreshing resuscitating its graces, expanding its charities, reviving its hopes, swelling its joys, multiplying its capabilities of usefulness, can never forget the favour; such a bright spot in its history, will be referred to with gratitude, while any of its precious fruits remain to bless the world.

And when a season of darkness ensues, in which zeal declines, the word preached does not profit, the pulse of piety beats feebly; the spiritual parts of the Church, remembering the days departed in which the arm of the Lord was revealed, will weep in secret places; they know, by its loss, the value of the blessing, and cry, *"Wilt thou not revive us again, that thy saints may rejoice in thee?"*

Thus I have attempted to explain the terms used in this text, to illustrate the sentiment it contains, "that God often interposes at a time of great sinfulness," and have assigned some reasons for the divine conduct, or why such an interposition is desirable.

REMARKS.

1. We learn *the duty of a church, in a time of declension.*

Some vainly imagine that nothing can be done. Influenced by their feelings, yielding to apathy, rather than to the word of God, they say, the time has not come that the Lord's house should be built. Such only seek an excuse. As well might the husbandman say that the season of harvest is the only time for him to labour, that at other seasons of the year he may fold his hands. Every season has its appropriate duties.

Surely when men make void God's law, it is not a time to slumber. The danger is too great for the Church to sleep at her post.

1. *We ought to ascertain the extent of the evil.* When Nehemiah went up to Jerusalem, to repair the house of the Lord, before he commenced active operations, he went out by night and surveyed by the light of the moon the extent of the desolation, that he might ascertain what was to be done. The responsibility of the Christian is too great, and life is too short to allow him to recline in ease. If God withholds his blessing from the word preached, if the ways of Zion mourn, something is wrong, and all who are attached to her interests, and seek her prosperity, should lose no time in searching for the cause. Each member should be visited and be urged to self-examination and repentance.

2. *It is our duty to call upon God in a time of declension.* He is the only hope of the church at such a time. If we have forsaken the Lord, and he has withdrawn the tokens of his favour, we must return to him and humble ourselves under his mighty hand. Seasons of humiliation should be appointed. As all our help must come from God, he has taught us that he will be inquired of by the house of Israel—special prayer should be offered. The low and languishing state of Zion should be spread out before the Lord in the closet, at the family altar, in the social circle, as well as in the public sanctuary. "There shall ye call upon me, and ye shall go and pray unto me, and I will hearken unto you. And ye shall seek me and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart."

3. *We ought to come up to the help of the Lord against the mighty.* While all eyes should be directed to heaven, we must

remember that a blessing is to be expected only in the performance of duty. The very fact that God giveth the increase renders it indispensible that Paul should plant and Apollos water. The great duty of "*working out our salvation*," is predicated upon the assurance that "it is God that worketh in us both to will and to do of his good pleasure." Some render the text, "It is time to work for thee, O Lord." When many are at ease in Zion, settled upon their lees, when iniquity abounds, and the authority of the law is disregarded, it is time for christians to awake to righteousness, to put on the whole armor of God; regard for the divine glory, sympathy for the mourning ways of Zion, compassion for perishing sinners should lead the friends of Christ to summon every energy and engage in the work of the Lord with zeal.

2. This subject furnishes a *solemn test of character*. When all are excited, in the midst of stirring scenes, it is difficult to discriminate, but when the love of many waxes cold, when men make void God's law, there is no room for sympathy, then we may ascertain the strength of principle, the depth of attachment; we see how *real* christians feel in a time of declension—they mourn in secret, they are concerned for the honour of the law, for the institutions of the gospel; like Esther they cannot endure the thought of the destruction coming upon their kindred—they weep before the Lord, confess their sins and humble themselves in dust. If you would learn the feelings of true christians, read the 9th chapter of Daniel, the 9th of Ezra, or the language of the weeping prophet; "Oh that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people!" Says David, "Rivers of waters run down mine eyes because men keep not thy law."

But the former believer, who has only a name to live, manifests no anxiety, the apathy of the church occasions no distress; if places of temptation are opened, so dangerous to the young. if the ways of Zion mourn because few come to her solemn feasts, he is not affected—he consults his ease and convenience; he has no faith in the efficacy of prayer; special efforts are looked upon with suspicion; every appeal is met with the reply that "God will carry on his own work." What a contrast to the feelings and conduct of the true christian.

What are *our* feelings? Men now make void God's law; it is a time of darkness and gloominess in Zion, the word preached does not take effect, circles of prayer are neglected. Death is carrying on his work—multitudes are living without God. How are we affected? Are we prepared to call upon God to begin to work? Does the condition of the church and the exposure of sinners so press upon our hearts that we have no rest? Does continual sorrow fill our bosom? I do not see how a christian can be happy when Zion mourns.

SERMON CCCCII.

BY REV. SAMUEL W. FISHER,

ALBANY, N. Y.

PROVIDENCE AND ITS TEACHINGS

"I form the light, and create darkness; I make peace and create evil; I the Lord do all these things. For when thy judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness."—ISAI. xiv. 7.—xxvi. 9.

THE providence of God is co-extensive with his works. It is operative wherever there are beings to be controlled or material orginizations to demand its powerful aid. Such is the doctrine of the first part of our text. I form the light, and create darkness; I make peace and create evil. The same omnipotent energy that of old gave birth to light, and by the revolution of the orbs, created darkness, is still at work originating and controlling the prosperity or the adversity that attends on human action. Light and darkness are figures beautifully expressive of the prosperity and the adversity that here brightens and darkens around us. Peace and evil are terms equally significant of the absence or the presence, on the one hand of desolating temporal judgments, as war and pestilence and famine; on the other of those spiritual trials which destroy our mental serenity and make the soul sad. In reference to all these things it is the emphatic meaning of the text that the divine providence extends to them either a direct supervision or a positive control. It is not intended that their authorship is in *all* respects divine; for a thousand free agencies may have co-operated in their production; minds by the myriad may have thrown their purposes in this direction, and hands without number have labored for this effect. But it is asserted that through all the seemingly chaotic mass of volitions and acts and events, there runs the silver cord of the divine purpose, along which flashes the divine energy, and around which, by an unseen law, the shapeless materials are crystallized into order and beauty. It is asserted that he who was great enough to create, is great enough to govern, and that where he has deigned to act the part of author and architect he will not fail to play the sovereign and

maintain the direct forces he has quickened. It is asserted, not indeed that sin is his creation, since *that*—the free product of a *creature's will*—is beyond the creative energy of a holy omnipotence, and involves a moral impossibility; but that no being lives in his wide domain, from Gabriel down to the tiniest form beyond the revelation of the most potent lens of the microscope, on whom his eye is not fixed, in whose actions he has not some concern, and over whom he does not exercise either a wise, moral or physical control; that over all the vast and countless events that occur on this footstool, God has his hand, and that only as he permits do they even manifest themselves. Against this doctrine of a universal providence, even when so stated as to acquit God of the authorship of sin, and yet maintain his supremacy unimpaired, there are many and specious objections. But whenever we have a clear "Thus saith the Lord" on which to rest, we have little concern respecting the adverse conclusions of any merely human intellect. They are to the word of God when faithfully expounded, as the ravings of insanity to the established facts of science.

By some, the whole subject of providence is resolved into fixed natural laws; and when they have hidden themselves and the events of life behind some law of the natural world, they dream of having escaped the immediate overruling providence of the Almighty. They do not consider that a law is only a mode of operation; that the laws of nature are nothing less than Jehovah putting forth in various forms his own omnipotent energy; that as he has constituted them, so he must support them; that it is just as senseless to talk of a self-sustaining and a self-operating law of nature, as it is to speak of a self-sustaining man or bird; and that the moment you introduce the idea of God as ever present, holding up the world from annihilation, and preserving all its forces in action, then you have at once and fully before you the idea of that sublime providence, which, from a point infinitely elevated, surveys the wide field of matter and mind, and holds in his own hand the final links of those countless chains of causes that reach down to all the events of this terrestrial sphere. What if we cannot trace the mighty chain of causation directly up to Jehovah, we can follow it far away until it is lost to us in the darkness that encompasses the throne, and it needs only a christian faith with purged vision to discern behind the cloud the hand which grasps and wields it to effect his sublime purposes.

Others again, in their anxiety to vindicate the character of Jehovah from the authorship of sin, do practically surrender up the world to the reign of chance, and sweep away the very idea of an efficient providence above us, without whose permission or agency, no event ever transpires. Because they cannot solve the problem of free agency and divine sovereignty, harmoniously operating in the production of the various scenes of time, they will save the

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freedom of man, by annihilating the direct supremacy of God. They will cut what they cannot untie. They are not content to take these twin truths, as they are clearly revealed in this word of life, and leave the reconcilation of them to a world of loftier intelligence—a state of profounder thought. But why need we thus distort and dishonour the simple word of God, and issue an edict of dethronement against our Maker, and plunge our spirits in all the chaotic horrors of an atheist's dream? Shall the superficial arguments of an unenlightened reason—of a reason, which, however clear it may see within the circle of its own proper vision, is encompassed on all sides by an horizon beyond which it cannot penetrate—avail to overturn a divine Sovereignty, the *modes* of whose operation lie hid in that world of spiritual existence, where the adventurous foot of no incarnate spirit has ever trode? It will be time for us to admit the justness of such reasoning, either when we feel within ourselves the clashing of God's working with our freedom, or, entering into the hidden laboratory of the Almighty, we discern there no efficient forces for the control of a moral universe. But until *that* time shall come, let not the insect of an hour criticise the operations of infinity and pronounce the clear developments of his word inconsistent with those of his works.

> "As if upon a full-proportioned dome,
> On swelling columns heav'd, the pride of art!
> A critic fly, whose feeble ray scarce spreads
> An inch around, with blind presumption bold,
> Should dare to tax the structure of the whole."

And when, in the sublime language of our prophet, it is uttered from the throne; "*I* form the light and create darkness; I make peace and create evil," then may we rejoice that there is a Providence above us, that extends itself not only to the good, but also to the evil; not only to mercy, but also to judgment; that the world is not surrendered to a soulless chance, blind, idiotic, senseless; a chance which works without reason, is guided by no intelligence, and labours for no end. To the pious heart it is a pre-eminently consoling truth, that God reigns, and that we may repose beneath the broad canopy of his universal providence.

If I am afflicted, it is no consolation to know that it is an accident; that I am the sport of a reasonless chance. I wish to know the purpose and the intent of my affliction; I wish to feel that a being, infinite in goodness and wisdom, has done it; to know that such an one has the power to limit the surges, and tame their fury; my whole soul pants to have God manifest himself, as the great operator, when I stand beside the bed of anguish, when I close the dying eye of friendship—when I witness the dread shock of conflicting forces—when I hear the shriek of agony as men in crowds, unshrouded and uncoffined, pass suddenly into eternity—and

when my own tabernacle shakes and sways to and fro before the breath of death. Then he can rejoice that God reigns; that never a blow falls unknown to him; that as we love him, every event of his providence shall chastise or discipline, testing our fidelity or working out for us an exceeding weight of glory. Here, on this blessed truth, thus explained, we can rest; secure though thousands fall around us; patient though cast into the furnace; joyful though encompassed by tribulation; calm and even jubilant, though death should come to rend asunder the mortal from the immortal. Into the mysteries of providence I seek not to penetrate. All human speculations here are profitless, save as they may give to this truth its just position before men. There will come a time, when, with a clearer intelligence, we shall study it profoundly; when, amid different scenes and from a loftier position, it will form no small part of the ecstacy of heaven, to behold the wisdom of the Almighty reveal itself through all these seemingly intricate, conflicting, and dark events of time. But while we remain here on the footstool, it will be to us a subject too deep indeed to be fathomed by the longest line of our reason, yet a delightful and a reviving truth, that our God doth exercise a providence wide as creation, and minute as the smallest and lowliest of his creatures.

We are now prepared to follow out the teaching of the *second* part of our text. "When thy judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness." It speaks only of that part of divine providence which has to do with judgments. Now, I understand the truth here asserted to be, that the designed effect, and in the main the actual effect, of the sterner providences of God, is to teach men the knowledge and the practice of righteousness. And in the devolopment of this truth, I ask you to consider,

I. *First*, that the judgments of God are designed to set his moral government, in respect to sin, in a proper light before men.

Amidst overflowing goodness, when borne on the flood tide of prosperity and wafted forward by gentle gales, men cease to regard their own sinful condition, and the character of that moral government beneath which they live. They hear the threatenings of the Bible with indifference, so long as they see around no mighty demonstrations of the divine purpose to punish the guilty. When no trouble visits them, when no plague affrights them then "pride compasseth them about as a chain," then "they set their mouth against the heavens and their tongue walketh through the earth." But when judgments come, they point men back to their sinful origin, and within to their sinful state. They are the clear teachings of a sin punishing God. They tell you, that it is only as man is guilty that he is condemned; that to set forth his character as righteous, and so unfold the righteousness of his government, God

visits us with pain and plunges us into affliction. Judgment wonderfully invigorates conscience, and imparts to it somewhat of its ancient and rightful authority. Then it convinces men of sin; then it arrays a violated law; then it echoes the declaration that the curse causeless shall not come. And thus the world learns to feel that under the just government above them, sin shall not go unpunished and crime shall yet be detected, and all the life of transgression shall meet with its fit and terrible reward.

There is just here, however, a nice point in the providence of God. It is incumbent on Jehovah, since this is merely a state of preparation and not of retribution, so to adjust his judgments and so to administer his providence, as neither on the one hand to *punish fully* all crime, nor on the other to let it wholly escape. For if men were punished all that they deserved here, then what need of another world fitted up and set apart for the special purpose of retribution? And if men were to experience no judgments following hard upon the heels of crime, then the utter impunity of the wicked, would breed in them the conviction, that the bosom of the infinite Jehovah did not swell with a deep abhoraence of sin, and that he neither designed to maintain a strictly righteous government here nor justly punish the guilty hereafter.

And, doubtless, this is in part the reason, why here there is such a mixture of mercy with judgment—why the wicked pass on in the enjoyment of so much prosperity, while every now and then a thunderbolt falls at their feet to teach them that God amidst all his kindness cannot forget, and will not have them forget, that they are sinners in need of repentance and the atoning blood of Christ, to save them from the approaching miseries of retributive justice. And this too is the reason why, although great and outrageous crime will in general, even in this world, bring down a measure of wo upon the guilty head, yet that sometimes we behold the contrast of a man most darkly depraved, passing prosperously through life and dying without pain, with that of a holy man living in the furnace and going up from the rack of suffering to the crown of glory. Henry the Eighth after a long reign, foul with pollution and wet with blood, goes out like a spent taper at the very summit of his prosperity; while Cranmer, the meek though imperfect christian, ascends to heaven in the flames of martyrdom. In all this we discern the wisdom of that providence which so distributes its judgments as to teach men both these great truths, that while this world is not a state of retribution, there is ahead of us, a scene of perfect retribution, when God the sin hater shall become the sin punisher, and judgment without mercy shall be suffered to carry into execution its full and fearful work. And every time you see or feel the divine judgments, you behold the demonstration of a holy moral government under which the transgressor must suffer in himself or by another. And every time you see a wicked man

pass on prosperously and a good man greatly afflicted, then do you behold a providence which points you forward to another world, where the balance shall be rightly adjusted ; where the prosperous sinner will descend into the surges of despair, while the afflicted saints ascends to his glorious throne. Thus by the manner of dispensing his judgments, does God clearly intimate to us the righteousness of his character, and by so doing he urges men to the practice of righteousness and the putting on of that which he hath provided through the atoning work of his beloved son.

II. The judgments of God are sometimes designed to destroy an unwarranted confidence in man or in any of the great natural agents which he has subjected to his power. There is in us all a strong tendency to trust in an arm of flesh. And this disposition manifests itself not unfrequently in the too perfect repose we indulge in the power of man to control the forces of nature. As science and art increase our power to wield the great natural agencies for the advancement of our interest and the promotion of our pleasure ; as one difficulty after another is overcome, and man, weak and insignificant though he be in stature, seems to have placed his foot upon the most tremendous forces of the physical creation, then distrust vanishes, then, forgetting a mighter hand—a sublimer intellect, the creature arrogates to himself the confidence and the power and the glory which belong solely to his Creator and Governor. And thus standing amid the triumphs of art, and elevated by the lofty flight of science far above the past, he treads the earth like one invested with omnipotence, to whose will or caprice the very elements are subject and whose fiat the most tempestuous of them all must play the part of an humble servitor.

The wind and the ocean are two of the strongest elements, whose united forces have been the terror of all the past. But to such perfection have we carried the art of ship-building, so compactly as well as beautifully are our vessels constructed, to please the eye and yet bid defiance to the rage of the waters ; so finished has become the art of the seaman, so rapidly and with such exquisite tact is the canvass spread or folded like the wing of some beauteous sea bird; so grandly does the noble craft walk the ocean as if instinct with a life of her own, yielding to the slightest impulse of the breeze, or the motion of her helm ; so fully has the sailor explored the ocean and the shore, and carried so high the knowledge of the heavens and the means of diserning, through the instruments with which genius has provided him, his position amid a boundless sea, that men cease to fear, as they are borne on the billows, and trusting in their power to triumph over these mighty elements on which their vessel floats and by which she is impelled, they lift not up the heart of confidence to Him who ruleth supreme over winds and waves. Our ocean is a noble highway on which

men embark by scores of thousands, fearless of the issue, because confident in an arm of flesh. And it must needs be that this broad deep of waters, the emblem of eternity, should now and then be stirred to its lowest depths in judgment, by the breath of the Almighty, and these grand and beautiful structures which art has willed to glorify as the highest reach of human skill in its mastery over these elements, should occasionally go down like lead into the bosom of the deep, for the very purpose of humbling the pride of man in his own works, and demonstrating the imperfection of that supremacy, which he boasts of wielding over the unfathomed ocean. Where now are the President, the United States, the Great Britain, with all of beauty, of intellct and manhood, that crowded their decks? Echo, from the cavern depths of the deep sea answers *here;* while the hoarse surges that beat and gambol above their submerged hulls, are the voice of God's judgment declaring the impotence of human might—the folly of human wisdom. And God designs that these significant and appaling providences should lead us to feel that he alone sits regent above the forces of nature—that to him alone these elements are submissive, and that man should learn righteousness in cherishing a simple hearted faith in him as alone supreme.

Fire is an element of vital usefulness and vast force. Ordinarily it is regarded by man as wholly within his control. He employs it as his agent in ten thousand processes of art and comfort and luxury; at his bidding it ministers at his table, creates the heat of summer amidst the reign of winter, and drives his iron steeds and wooden leviathans, over continents and oceans. At times, warmed by the past, he fortifies himself against its too exuberant activity, by self-created protections; and relying upon policies of insurance he rises to a presumptuous confidence in his own security. Then cometh the triumph of this long manacled element. Defying our most sleepless vigilance, bursting away from our most guarded fireside, it seizes suddenly upon our most precious treasures, it devours with appalling greediness alike the monuments of art, the mausoleums of buried glory and the humbler abodes of the poor. As it leaps from dwelling to dwelling, rioting in the palace and the warehouse with a seemingly infernal joy, until its black footprints are the sole index where once flourished the imperial city, and the protectors and the protected—the insurers and the insured—are involved in one wide and utter ruin; then above the rear of that terrific power, is heard the voice of Jehovah rebuking the miserable confidence men have indulged in their own boasted mastery over this great element of the material world. New York and Pittsburg and Quebec on the land—the Lexington, the Pulaski, and the Missouri, on the water, are the fearful utterances of judgment addressed to the nation within a few years

past, which have started us from our fancied security, and made men tremble at the cry of fire.

Steam is another of those agents, which beyond all previous example, beyond even the most sanguine anticipations of the past, this age boasts of applying with the happiest effects to a thousand useful purposes. And certainly the triumph of art in this direction has been of the noblest character. It has changed the face of commerce; it has introduced a new element of national power and national prosperity; it has partially bridged the ocean and bound together continents; it has approximated distant cities and given to the press a power of spreading itself over the minds of millions in a day; and it has supplied a force susceptible of indefinite expansion in any direction and of application to innumerable purposes. It stands first in might and foremost in utility of all the beneficent creations which science has given to the world, in this or any previous age. But while art has effected all this, it has never yet been able in practice, so to master this monster power as to render it wholly innocuous. Committing ourselves to locomotives and steamboats, outstripping the wind through the impulsive power of this subtle and elastic fluid, and all confident in Captain, Pilot, Engineer, we forget that this same tremendous energy which now confined in one direction, moves such immense masses with such fearful velocity, may by any one of a thousand casualties either burst away from his dungeon and rending his fetters deal death and woe among the hundreds who are subject to his power, or in the very rapidity of his flight, dash them with fatal violence upon the material objects that surround his path. Thus on our western rivers, we are so often startled by the report of some terrific explosion, while here on the quiet waters of our noble Hudson, our ears are assailed by the crash of wrecked steamers, and the rending of timbers and the agonizing shrieks of multitudes in their last mortal agony. And in this way does God in these judgments so alarming—so terrible, compel us to feel that he alone is the perfect master of this wonderful agent, and that when man commits himself to its power he should first of all commit himself to Him who can restrain its violence. It is true that in most cases the fatal work may be traced back to the negligence or the imprudence of man. But who cannot see that, when a worm on earth attempts to guide and control this mighty agent, he necessarily exposes himself to accidents the most frightful in character and fatal in result; against which the utmost prudence ordinarily attainable by man cannot guard; to which the most trivial circumstances may give birth and from which no earthly legislation, however wise in forecast, and energetic in practice, can fully deliver him. With all the safeguards that experience has supplied, it is still true that secret flaws may exist; with all the vigilance that self-interest and the warning voice of the past may create, it is still true that men will have their unguarded hours!

with all our appliances to fortify ourselves against danger, it will still be true and must ever remain so, that when we avail ourselves of the might of such tremendous agents, until we shere in the omniscience and omnipotence of God himself, we shall ever be exposed to accidents most terrible and fatal. And as Jehovah from time to time suffers these judgments to ring out their horrid peal over those we love laid low in death, so he teaches us to regard him as the only competent governor of these forces of nature, and leads us to the exercise of righteousness in an humble trust in his Almighty arm.

These illustrations of the position before us are amply sufficient. I need not dwell upon the other great agents on which man has so confidently reposed for the accomplishment of his purposes; nor detail here the character of that explosive force, by which war has been changed from the sword to the musket—from the catapult to the cannon. You cannot have forgotten the fearful judgment of the Almighty, when that huge instrument of death, named almost in seeming mockery, if not in pride, "*the peace maker*," hurled its ponderous masses among the gay revellers on board the Princeton, and laid the chiefs of the nation low in the grave. Oh! how loudly do such scenes rebuke our vain confidence in any earthly agency, and teach us the impotence of man's boasted almightiness, and warn us not to forget that power above us, in whose grasp all these elements and agencies of the material creation are but the merest toys of childhood.

III. It is the design of Jehovah, in his general judgments, to rebuke our national sins. Individual offences meet with peculiar judgments. The victim of licentiousness reaps in his own frame and spirit the seed he has sown. The robber is made to feel in due time something of the avenging power of law upon his own person. And when crime of any kind becomes general, when it rises into such importance as to infect the community at large and become a national sin, then is it always right to regard the general judgments sent upon the people, as designed to rebuke and reform the general crime. When judgments fall upon great masses of men, when the individual is merged in the multitude, and the calamity becomes so great as to resound through the country and effect the national heart, then may we rest assured that God is thus reminding us of some wide-spread national offence, and in the sternest language bidding us reform or perish. It is only by some fearful stroke of his providence, by some vast conflagration, some far-reaching pestilence some appalling triumph of the great forces of nature over man and his bulwarks of safety, that God can speak to nations in rebuke of their enormous crimes. Should he speak to our magistrates as did Moses to Pharaoh, yet would he be obliged to send along with it the plagues that struck deep into the national

heart; should he write upon the walls of our capitol, the fearful scroll that blazed forth upon the sacrilegious feasters of Belteshazzer its enigmatical terror, yet must a Cyrus penetrate that massive and seemingly impregnable Babylon in order in impress its truth upon the nation at large. As only he, who, in the greatness of his sovereignty, fully controls the elements of national ruin, can permit them to coalesce anywhere and do their fearful work, so he alone speaks through them to us, and that in a language which none need misunderstand.

These national offences, in the main the same for a quarter of a century past, have been too marked and prominent to need enumeration. But where it necessary to fix upon any sin for which we in this section of our country are most directly responsible, there would be found among them two that could not be past by. Of these the desecration of the Sabbath demands distinct mention. Long years ago it had become so prevalent as to awaken the most intense anxiety, among the men who feared God, for our national integrity and permanent prosperity. And, though a few years have witnessed a decided improvement in some sections of the country, yet this is barely sufficient to warrant hope for the future, not enough to secure us from the curse that of right should descend upon present crime. Despite all the efforts of philanthropy and religion, in the midst of great and increasing light shed around this holy day, from the ascertained harmony of it with the providence, as well as with the word of Jehovah, our ears are still assailed, and that too at the very doors of our sanctuaries, by the rattling of stages, the his of the locomotive, the bell of the steamboat and the horn of the packet. With the Bible in their hands there are found multitudes who count it a day for merely sensual indulgence, fashionable display, riotous pleasure or slothful rest; with the holiest of covenant upon their lips, there are found professed Christians, who in mere matters of secular business, will suffer themselves to violate the morning or the evening of these hallowed hours by travelling, and that two in cars, stages and steamboats. With such looseness of opinion and practice in some of the church and so all-pervading an hostility to the sacredness of this day among the world, is it wonderful that the poor orphans on her canals, with the vast army of boatmen that throng these miniature rivers, pleading with united voice for the privilege of rest on the Sabbath have for several years been spurned from the walls of the capitol of the largest and wealthiest and most populous state in the Union? When such things exist; when public convenience is made to ride over public morals; when the gain or the pleasure of the few is regarded as paramount to the dictates of conscience, and the authority of God's word; when state and national legislatures do not hesitate to extend their sessions into the hours con-

secrated to Jehovah ;* when the national executive, in almost the only form of national action that touches at once all parts of the country, and simultaneously extends its arms from New Orleans to Bangor, still maintains, to a large extent, the Sabbath mails, and compels the army of government officials in this department to sacrifice their richest privilege to the mercenary spirit of clamorous Sabbath-breakers; when these and other things like them exist, it is obvious that reformation has but begun, and that we may expect that judgment in fierce bolts will fall upon us, and the voice of God echoed in our burning cities, in our wrecked steamers, shall be uttered loudly in rebuke of our fearful Sabbath desecration.

So broadly marked also, and still so prominent is the vice of intemperance in the nation, that it cannot be for a moment forgotten. It meets us in the tavern ; it meets us at the polls ; it meets us in the numberless groggeries, that like the purlieus of the pit open their doors all over our state ; it meets us in the gay and fashionable saloon, where the sparkling champagne opens the portals to the steep descent of inebriation, and begins the dance of revelry that ends in the darkness of the grave ; it even glares upon us from the deck of the steamboat, and these magnificent floating palaces, with all their luxurious tables and costly provisions for the comfort of the traveller, are still polluted by the gay dram-shop, where the young may find seduction, and the old confirmation in the ways of the inebriate. That great advances have been made in the overthrow of this evil is too obvious to need remark. That much remains to be done in settling the great principles on which this cause shall permanently rest, so as to command universally the assent of all classes of the moral and the intelligent, and that a vast work opens before us in educating the coming generation so that they shall be Rechabites in practice and the sparkling wine cup shall cease to be the pledge of friendship, is equally obvious. Nor is it to be wondered at, while this and kindred vices prevail so extensively, if judgments of the most appalling character should sometimes fall upon us, and that too as the *direct result of a vitiated public sentiment on this whole subject.* In instances not a few, the most fearful public calamities are traceable to the agency of those who were the guilty victims of this degrading habit. Where the whole truth to be told, as it will be in that day when no earthly interests will avail to conceal it, we doubt not that the connection between intemperance and judgment would be revealed in a thousand cases where it is now unsuspected or unknown. And it becomes us to remember that all those who

*This sacrilege is not peculiar to our national Congress. Even the respectable Senate of New York, under the excitement of a partisan warfare, without the least show of necessity, occupied a portion of the first hour of the Sabbath preceding their final adjourment for this year, in an angry debate.

contribute to form a public sentiment which tolerates this vice in any class of men, be they senators or magistrates—be they public servants or private citizens, are directly responsible for the desolating judgments which it brings down upon the nation. From the relations between them, the innocent may be involved with the guilty in the dreadful sweep of a public calamity; but the responsibility of its origin and its curse, will ultimately rest only on those who either prepared the material or fired the train. In reference, therefore, to this and other national vices, these national judgments have a voice of stern rebuke and wholesome chastisement.

Finally. These wide-spread and affecting judgments are designed to teach men at once the insecurity of wealth and of life. Falling upon us, as they have done of late, with appalling rapidity; wrapping in flames our cities and villages; devouring in a few hours the monuments of the past and the garnered wealth of the present; compelling thousands to encamp beneath the open sky who once were the tenants of palaces: whelming multitudes in an instant beneath the waters, on which our vessels have hitherto floated as securely as when moored at our wharves, they demonstrate most convincingly the transient nature of property, the insecurity of life; they enforce, with fearful emphasis, the exhortations of Scripture, "Set your affections on things above." "Be ye also ready, for in such a hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh." There are few, if any events, that afford a more terrible demonstration of the insecurity and transient nature of earthly possessions, than that of a vast conflagration. And of late these have multiplied to an extent unparalleled in our history. Their awful voice rebukes our national love of gain, our grasping after treasure, our miserable ambition to wield the power of immense revenues, and transmit to our posterity the name and the fortune of a Crœsus. They tell us to disburse our treasure, where it will fertilize the moral desert; where it will rebuild our ruined humanity; where it will open the eyes of the blind, and bind up bleeding hearts, and reveal to benighted millions the riches of the gospel and the treasures of immortality. As you gaze upon the rage and the devastation of this fierce element, behold the perishable nature of the monuments of art—of the products of industry—of the glory of wealth. Let each of us be most solicitous to lay up a treasure where flames cannot reach it; where the waves cannot bury it; where time cannot corrupt it. Thus profiting by the judgments of the Most High, our wealth will enrich the wastes of the world, our hearts will attain an habitual readiness to meet the great conqueror, come he in the fire, or in the flood, on the land, or on the ocean, suddenly or after protracted illness. Let us first of all see to it that our own individual lives are more pure, more benevolent, more truly Christ-like, and then let us bear our country on our hearts before the mercy-seat, and plead with Him who sits regent

above the forces of nature, and controls the elements of national ruin, to grant us the aid of his omnipotence to secure to our nation the highest temporal and spiritual prosperity. *Let the priests, the ministers of the Lord, weep between the porch and the altar, and let them say, Spare thy people, O Lord, and give not thy heritage to reproach, that the heathen should rule over them; wherefore should they say among the people, where is their God?*

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SERMON CCCCIII.

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GOD'S PROVIDENCE IN THE LATE FIRE.

"Except the Lord keep the city, the Watchman waketh but in vain."—Psalm 127, 1.

Our city has been visited by a terrible calamity. A fire, such as it was supposed could not again occur, has spread around us a desolation unequalled except by the memorable calamity of 1835. Manufactories and warehouses with their rich stocks of merchandise have been consumed; stately mansions have been laid in ruin; costly furniture has been strown about in one common wreck, while a military force has preserved it from pillage; families have been unhoused; the rich and the poor have been turned into the streets together, some watching with weary eyes the poor remnants of their property, and others made dependent upon charity for food and raiment. The fabrics of every art, the products of every clime, all that ministers to human comfort or luxury, served but to feed the insatiable flame. It devoured heaps of costly merchandise like chaff. The accumulations of years, the purchase of millions, that which might have clothed, and fed, and adorned a city, served only to redden the sky for a few hours, or to blacken the spot where it stood. Iron doors and granite walls presented no barrier to the raging element. These, shattered and riven, were heaped together in one promiscuous ruin. Plans of business were deranged; hopes of prosperity were frustrated; and a shock was given to the mercantile community, which, notwithstanding all our wealth and enterprise, must be seriously felt perhaps for years. Anxiety and alarm were spread far and wide, by

which pleasure has been interrupted, and in some instances health impaired. But worst of all, *life* itself was sacrificed. A terrific agent, as yet unknown, burst forth upon the panic-struck multitude, rending solid walls with the shock of an earthquake, and hurrying the flames from house to house with the rapidity of lightning. By that explosion, one and another, and another, engaged in rescuing property, or standing incautiously near, or reposing in fancied security in a neighboring dwelling, was crushed beneath a falling wall or buried in the spreading flames. Happily the multitude, warned by premonitory symptoms of the presence of an explosive element, escaped a catastrophe which had otherwise spread a pall over the entire city.—As it is, many hearts have been pierced with sorrow, at the untimely and appaling end of a husband, a father, a brother or a son.

The calamity then is a *public* one. It affects not individuals alone. It is felt through all the channels of trade; it is felt in the solicitude every where awakened for the higher security of property and life; it is felt in the deep sympathy that pervades the community for those who have suffered the loss of property or friends.

Such a calamity properly claims the notice of the pulpit, the interpreter of the providence as well as the word of God. While then we are investigating the causes and extent of this disaster, and devising measures to prevent its recurrence, we should not fail to view it as a providential dispensation, and to give it its appropriate moral influence. We should always survey our public mercies or calamities in this light, that as a community we may cherish a sense of God's presence and agency in all our affairs, and may secure his favor by a timely regard for his holy will.

Let us attend therefore, briefly, to *the evidence that this calamity has befallen us of God;* and then inquire *why he hath so afflicted us.*

There is a connecting of calamities with the providence of God, which is fanciful and superstitious; and there is also a recognition of God's hand in passing events which is rational and becoming. If this fire had originated from a stroke of lightning all would have attributed it to the providence of God. But it may be as truly traceable to that providence if it originated by accident, or by the direct and malicious agency of man. The intervention of second causes does not dispense with the superintending Providence of God. It but removes that Providence one step further back in the chain of causes; and however numerous may be the links of that chain, we must at length reach that which rests in the hand of God, and gives him the control of all. The agency of God may be direct and causative, or it may be indirect and but permissive; yet in one mode or the other, his agency is concerned

in every event which comes to pass. To suppose otherwise, would be to suppose that events take place under the government of God, *which are beyond his control*; a supposition derogatory to him as the supreme ruler of the universe. If events take place in conformity with certain established laws, it still remains that God is the author of those laws, and established them knowing what results they would produce, and therefore those results are in some sense attributable to Him. This is not, however, the doctrine of fatalism, which attributes every thing to a fixed decree, in the execution of which man is a mere passive instrument. God's purpose in an event does not destroy man's free agency.

Men act voluntarily when they do any thing according to the will of God; and often in seeking merely their own ends they are unconsciously fulfilling his great designs. And when they act contrary to his laws, it is because he suffers them to transgress, rather than disturb the moral order of his kingdom by interposing violently to prevent it. Besides, God often makes use of the wickedness of men to execute his own judgments. Not that he thereby sanctions their wickedness, but that having suffered it to be perpetrated rather than destroy their moral agency, he gives it a direction which causes the very wrath of man to further his own designs and to advance his praise. A war begun in covetousness or ambition, may be made to extend the kingdom of the Prince of Peace.

Human actions and the events of life are so linked to each other, that if we recognize in any manner the government of God over the world, we must concede to him the superintendence of all its affairs; acknowledging his agency, either direct or permissive, in every thing that comes to pass. Each event, however trivial, is related to other events; may be the condition of their existence, and of the welfare of the race.

The scriptures, especially of the Old Testament, always make the divine agency prominent in the affairs of men. It was God who fought the battles of his people, who gained their victories, who humbled them for their sins, who led them into captivity, who restored them to Judea, who built their temple, who gave them their kings, in short who managed all their national concerns. It is true that Jehovah sustained a peculiar relation to Israel; yet he has in fact the same superintendence over all the affairs of men which he exercised under the theocracy. The devout mind instinctively recognizes that superintendence. Philosophy cannot fail to perceive it in the events of every day. The calamities that befall an individual, the loss of property or friends, sickness, or death, though the result of his own imprudence or negligence, or of certain established laws, are nevertheless traced in scripture to the hand of God, as dispensations of mercy or of judgment.

So of the calamities of nations, pestilence, war, famine and the

like;—these are God's judgments, the "terrible things" whereby he makes known his ways "in righteousness."

The calamity that has befallen our city therefore, whether originating in carelessness or in malice, is to be traced eventually to the Providence of God. "Shall there be evil in a city, and the Lord hath not done it?"

But *for what reason*, we may inquire secondly, *has God thus afflicted us?* What lesson should we learn from this dispensation of his Providence?

I answer, in the first place, that *it is designed to rebuke us for our worldliness and impiety.* In saying this, I do not affirm that those who are immediately involved in this calamity have been pre-eminently guilty in the sight of God, and have therefore fallen under so severe a judgment. By no means. The reply of Christ to those who "told him of the Galileans, whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices," is equally appropriate here. "Suppose that these Galileans were sinners above all the Galileans, because they suffered such things? I tell you nay; but except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish. Or those eighteen upon whom the tower in Siloam fell and slew them, think ye that they were sinners above all men that dwelt in Jerusalem? I tell you nay; but except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish." We are not to construe the judgments of God thus severely against individuals. The heaviest calamities do not always fall upon the worst of men. Often the most wicked are seemingly the most prospered. This is not a world of retribution. Men are not dealt with here according to the strict measure of justice under the law of God

I attach then no peculiar demerit to individual sufferers, when I say that this providence is a rebuke for worldliness and impiety. It is not a rebuke administered to them in particular. Yet, it may be said in passing, that this calamity conveys to individual sufferers, a rebuke proportionate to the measure in which they have indulged the spirit of the world. Those who are the children of God, will doubtless regard it as a part of that fatherly discipline by which he would restrain their waywardness, and bring them into closer fellowship with himself. They will cheerfully submit to this apparent evil, feeling that it is but light in comparison with their transgressions, and that it is designed for good. Those who are yet estranged from God, may well consider this a call of his Providence superadded to the neglected commands and invitations of his Word, to startle them from their dream of carnal security, and make them feel that there *is* a God to whom they must give *some* regard.

But we are seeking rather, the lessons which it inculcates upon the community. Viewed in connection with similar calamities, it is a most serious admonition to men of business, and through them to the whole community. It is but one of a series

of calamities which have fallen upon the principal cities and towns of the American continent during the present year. Pittsburg, in an adjacent state, Quebec, in an adjacent province, have suffered perhaps *more* in proportion than ourselves from the devouring element; while many of the leading towns and villages through the land present similar scenes of desolation. Now why is all this? Why in such rapid succession have these disasters fallen upon the seats of commerce? Why has the same terrific agent been commissioned to destroy not what was poor and worthless, but what was costly and valued; what was at once the evidence and the element of commercial prosperity. Is it not because that prosperity has been too much our idol and our boast? God has been aiming in various modes to restrain the pride and covetousness of a nation which is advancing with such rapid strides to the summit of wealth and power. He has sent death into our high places; he has sent confusion into all the departments of trade; he has frustrated our worldly hopes and schemes, and destroyed our prosperity, till we feared and trembled before him. Yet scarcely were his judgments stayed, when men began again to throw off his restraints, and to run the same career of worldliness as before. They made haste to be rich, regardless of God's law; regardless of God's glory; regardless often of God's day; regardless of their obligations to the cause of Christ, and to a perishing world. Now nothing is more true in the history of communities, than that with an increase of wealth and luxury comes an increase of wickedness. Hence the spirit of worldliness, fostered by prosperity, needs to be checked by frequent reverses. Without such restraints men would throw off all fear of God, and tower in their impiety to the very heavens.

All the calamities that befall mankind are in some sense the result of sin. They may be the penalties of those physical laws which the sufferers have violated; but they are related also to the moral law. Death, the chief of temporal evils, has passed upon all men, *because all have sinned.* It is a standing token of God's displeasure at iniquity. And if this be true of the greater evil it is true also of the less. How many engines of destruction have been called into being by human wickedness!

The earth was "cursed" for the sake of man. Had man continued holy, the earth would have retained the loveliness of Eden; briars and thorns would never have sprung up in his pathway; the earthquake and storm, fire, flood, famine and pestilence, would never have been sent forth to ravage his abode; the command would have been given to each element of destruction,—"Touch not the children of my love!" All the evils under which the world now groans are the result of sin. Man has provoked them by the transgression of God's law. It is for this the sea devours his ships, the tornado lays waste his fields, and the fire consumes his cities—

in a world of holy beings such evils are unknown. But with a fallen race God must resort to these severe chastisements, if he would maintain his authority over them, or reclaim them to himself. In such calamities he teaches men on a great scale his displeasure at sin, and his determination not to let wickedness pass unrebuked; he makes an exhibition of the power of his anger which should fill the world with awe. "My flesh trembleth for fear of thee, and I am afraid of thy judgments."

It were vain to attempt to specify the sins for which God has now visited this community. There may be no *one* sin which has called for such an exhibition of his displeasure; but there is wickedness enough among us to deserve yet sorer judgments. Our provocations against heaven may have been accumulating for years. But if we cannot learn its specific cause, we should not lose sight of the fact that this calamity is a mark of God's displeasure. It is only by such calamities, involving alike the righteous and the wicked, that he can deal with communities for their transgressions. Communities must meet their retribution here.

The analogies of Providence may help us to a right view of this subject. The laws of God's providence, the principles on which he deals with men are the same in every age.—Now we find in the history of mankind that God has often visited cities and communities for their impiety, and (what is here worthy of note) has made fire the agent in their destruction. You remember the terrible doom of Sodom and Gomorrah, which whether, as some suppose, it was occasioned by a volcanic eruption, or was the effect of miracle, was threatened and inflicted *by the Lord* for sins which cried to heaven.

On one occasion, when the children of Israel murmured in the wilderness, the Lord heard it and "his anger was kindled, and the fire of the Lord burnt among them, and consumed them that were in the uttermost parts of the camp." This was probably a fire kindled by lightning; but a fire kindled by the hands of men, was often the instrument of an avenging God. Jerusalem was taken by the Chaldeans and burnt, for contemning the word of the Lord;* it was destroyed a second time, for rejecting Christ and persecuting his followers.

Jehovah threatened to destroy that city by fire for Sabbath-breaking. "If ye will not hearken to me, to hallow the Sabbath-day, and not to bear a burden, even entering in at the gates of Jerusalem on the Sabbath-day, then will I kindle a fire in the gates thereof (*i.e.* by the hands of enemies in war,) and it shall devour the palaces of Jerusalem and it shall not be quenched." So when we as a city suffer the breach of Sabbath without remonstrance, when we might prevent it by law, we have reason to fear the judgments of the Almighty.

* Jer. xxxvi: 16 v.

God threatened also to consume the enemies of his people by fire. "I will kindle a fire in the wall of Damascus, and it shall consume the palaces of Benhadad." "For three transgressions of Gaza and for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof: but I will send a fire on the wall of Gaza; which shall devour the palaces thereof." The same doom is threatened against Tyre, Edom and Moab. So then God makes use of *fire* as an instrument of his displeasure against communities, and that too for sins of which *we* have been guilty!

In the year 1666, the oldest and most wealthy and populous part of the city of London was laid in ashes. The fire continued three or four days, and burnt 373 acres within the walls and 63 without; 89 parish churches with many other houses of worship; a variety of public buildings, and over 13,000 dwellings.* This fire was preceded, the year before, by a dreadful plague, which swept ninety thousand into the grave. Now it is well known that at this time London was one of the most corrupt cities of the world. The English Court was exceedingly profligate, and the English monarch a disgrace to the name of man or king. "Debauchery," says a writer of that period, "was made a test of royalty: and a man was suspected to be disaffected to his prince, if he did not profane the name of his God."

These calamities occurred too but three or four years after two thousand of the most able and faithful ministers of Christ in the land had been ejected from their livings, because they would not violate their consciences by the observance of idle ceremonies; and the fire but six months after the passage of the *five mile act*,† by which these same ministers, after being turned out of their churches, for continuing to teach *in private*, "were barbarously turned out of their houses, and not suffered to live within five miles of any corporation, or of the places where they had been ministers."

Now was there no connection between these calamities and these sins? Were not the fire and plague the tokens of God's displeasure at the wickedness of the times? "Before *him* went the

* "Fire, breaking out in a bakers house near the bridge, spread itse on all sides with such rapidity, that no efforts could extinguish it, till it laid in ashes a considerable part of the city. The inhabitants without being able to provide effectually for their relief, were reduced to be spectators of their own ruin; and were pursued from street to street by the flames, which unexpectedly gathered round them. Three days and nights did the fire advance; and it was only by the blowing up of houses, that it was at last extinguished. About four hundred streets and thirteen thousand houses, were reduced to ashes." (Hume 2, 453.) These streets were mostly narrow, and the houses built of wood.

† "It was enacted, that no dissenting teacher who took not the non-resistance oath, should, except upon the road, come within five miles of any corporation, or of any place, where he had preached after the act of oblivion. The penalty was a fine of fifty pounds, and six months imprisonment. By ejecting the non-conforming clergy from their churches, and prohibiting all separate congregations, they had been rendered incapable of gaining any livelihood by their spiritual profession. And now, under color of removing them from places were their influence might be dangerous, an expedient was fallen upon to deprive them of all means of subsistence."

pestilence, and burning coals went forth at his feet." If these events had occurred in the days of prophecy, would they not have been predicted as divine judgments for sin? Would not the voice of the Lord's prophet have been heard in the streets of London, as in Jerusalem, saying, "because ye have profaned my sanctuary and blasphemed my name, because ye have rejected my ministers, and would none of my ways, I will kindle a fire in the midst of you and consume you." And is there no connection between our calamity and our sins? Nothing for which God designs to rebuke and humble us? Is there no fraud, corruption, Sabbath-breaking, or impiety, for which he would reprove us as a community? Let us not fail to acknowledge his hand in this event; and while we deprecate his judgments, let us seek to avert them in future by the removal of those moral evils which precede and provoke them. Oh, how should we hate those sins which expose us to such judgments! If we suffer our city to increase in wickedness, as it increases in extent, numbers and resources, it will become like Sodom a heap of combustible matter to attract and feed the fire of God's wrath. God has rebuked us sorely for our sins.

God would teach us, in the second place, by this providence, *the emptiness of all earthly possessions and enjoyments, and the uncertainty of life itself.* Of this individuals are continually reminded by the changes through which they are called to pass. But here we are taught it *as a community* on the broadest scale. Did we but believe the testimony of God's word concerning the vanity of earthly things, we should not need these repeated and appaling demonstrations of its truth. But so prone are we to fasten our affections upon earthly good, and make it the chief object of pursuit, that we can only be convinced of its insufficiency to meet our wants, by some sudden desolation like that which we have witnessed. We need these admonitions; without them we should utterly neglect our highest good. Severe though they be, they are sent in kindness, to turn off our thoughts from what is perishable to what is substantial and abiding. How plainly might we read the doom of all earthly riches and enjoyments in the light of yonder flames! Well-furnished houses, and well-stocked stores, "buildings that had been long in rearing, and treasures that had been long in gathering," were reduced to ashes and scattered to the winds. "In one hour how great riches is come to nought!" The most worldly spectator was forced to exclaim, "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity!" That very compactness, which in a city facilitates trade and friendly intercourse, served but to make the work of destruction more easy and more extensive.

How unexpected was this destruction! How many retired that night secure in the possession of thousands, who rose impoverished, to mourn over the lost labors of years! How many who had gone abroad for recreation were hurried from the scene of

gaiety by the intelligence of the destruction of their homes! Who knoweth what a day may bring forth? And as of property so of life. By what various and unlooked-for casualties may it be terminated! The bolt from heaven may lay you low, or your own walls may bury you! That doleful cry of fire became the knell of death to some who were most eager to respond to it. Why then should we glory in riches? Why set our hearts upon them? Why set our hearts on life, or count it for one moment our's? We know not, when we retire at night, but we shall awake in the morning penniless, if we awake at all; and we may be startled at midnight by the burning of our dwelling, to find it our own funeral pile. Be our's then the treasure that cannot fail, and our's the life that cannot die.

A *third* lesson which God would teach us by this providence, is that which is mainly inculcated in the text, *our constant and absolute dependence upon Himself.* "Except the Lord keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain." This declaration comes to *us* with peculiar point and emphasis. Ten years ago a large portion of the business section of this city was laid waste by fire. The cold of the night, the scarcity of water, the fear of tottering buildings in narrow streets, these and other circumstances combined to baffle all ordinary efforts to subdue the flames. Our citizens were stimulated by that calamity to make provision against fire, by the introduction of that pure and copious stream, which has proved to the city a stream of life. We are indebted, under God, to that provision, for the preservation of an immense amount of property exposed to the recent fire. But we have placed too much reliance upon it. How often has it been our boast, that a fire like that of 1835 never *could* occur again; that the ravages of fire must hereafter be restricted to a narrow sphere; that we had obtained command of an enemy, that had once sported with our possessions, and mocked at our strength. In the pride of our hearts we said with Ephraim of old, "the bricks are fallen down, but we will build with hewn stones; the sycamores are cut down, but we will change them into cedars." We have multiplied our resources, and increased our vigilance, till in our self-confidence, we have looked with contempt on the providence of God.

But God has taught us another lesson. He has shown us that if we can extinguish fire, we cannot control those chemical agents, whose mysterious combination defies all human barriers, and rocks a city to its foundations; that we cannot control the winds of heaven, or regulate those currents and counter-currents which, generated by the heat of a furnace, whirl the flames with indescribable velocity from house to house, and street to street. The fire called to its aid other elements more terrific than itself, and *has once more mastered us!* We may have the Croton, we may have a vigilant watch, and an active corps of firemen, and still be forced

to weep in our impotence at a city laid in ruins. We need another protector, without whose favor we are never safe—*Except the* LORD *keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain!*

The best guardians of your property are the men who, morning and evening, implore the favor and protection of God; *the righteous*, for whose sakes God ever spares or mitigates his judgments; who implore God to be your defence by night, and who acknowledge his merciful protection with the returning light of day. These are our watchmen and our bulwark. Oh, when shall all learn to commit their property, their families, and their lives to God, as to a Father who is all wise and powerful and kind! Let the inhabitants of this city thus with one heart seek the Lord, and he will be "a fire," not *within* us for our destruction, but "round about" us for our defence, and "a glory in the midst of us."

I add but one more reflection upon this event, viz.: *That it is at once an emblem and a warning of the final destruction of the world.* That terrific agent with which we have been called to contend, is yet to rage and triumph on a broader field. How appaling was the sight of scores of buildings sending up their huge columns of flame and smoke till the moon and stars were hid. But there shall yet be a conflagration in which cities shall vanish like smoke, forests shall be consumed, mountains shall melt like wax, the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat. Does it seem to you incredible? Go view the ruins of a little fire kindled in the midst of us; see the devastation produced by the explosion of gases pent up in a single chamber. Think then of the fires rolling and surging beneath our feet, of which volcanoes are but the flues giving vent to their superfluous rage; think of the chemical agents held under bonds in the bowels of the earth, and causing it to quake and open and swallow cities in its mouth. God alone restrains these destructive agents. He has them under his control, and he has but to set them free and we shall see a *world* on fire, and hear explosions that *rend the heavens*. And he *will* set them free; yes, proud scoffer, this world once overflowed with water, shall yet, as one great furnace, flame. Oh, that great and notable day of the Lord, when all the artillery of his wrath shall be brought to bear upon his foes! when the wild elements, from above and beneath, shall leap to avenge his insults; and he shall wind up the drama of our world by showing a guilty, God-denying race that *he is the Lord*, in letters of fire that shall be read and remembered in eternity. These heavens and this earth are by his *word* alone held back at any moment from destruction. They are "reserved to fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men." That day is long delayed—delayed that mercy may gather larger fruits—that Immanuel may see of the travail of his soul. "Yet come it will, and as a thief in the night." The men of that generation shall scarce arouse from

heir midnight slumbers ere "the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, and the earth and the works that are therein shall be burnt up." There is a *day of fire* yet to burst upon our world; a day of judgment, when the Lord shall appear *in flaming fire* with his holy angels; a day of retribution, when a *fire* shall go before him and shall "devour his adversaries." "Who shall abide the day of his coming, and who shall stand when he appeareth?" "Who among us shall dwell with devouring fire; who among us shall dwell with everlasting burning." "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God"—for *our God* is *a consuming fire!* I warn you, dying fellow-men, to escape from that fire which burns to the lowest hell. You heard the cry of those who were struggling amidst the flames; you saw them leaving all and fleeing for their lives. Oh! be in earnest to escape a greater danger. Look not behind you, stay not in all the plain; flee to that *rock* which only shall withstand the fires that dissolve the universe.

SERMON CCCCIV.

BY REV. THOMAS BRAINERD.

PHILADELPHIA.

ON THE DEATH OF GENERAL JACKSON.

PREACHED IN THE PINE STREET CHURCH, SABBATH EVENING, JULY 6, 1845.

"I exhort therefore that first of all supplications, prayers, intercessions and giving of thanks be made for all men; for Kings and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all Godliness and honesty."—1 Tim. ii, 1, 2.

1. We are taught in this passage a respect for constituted authority. Almost any form of civil government is preferable to lawless anarchy, and therefore, Christians, subject even to Roman despotism were instructed to remember their rulers, as such, at the altar of prayer.

2. We are taught by the text the doctrines that God's Providence legislates over all rulers so that in answer to prayer, he will so "rule rulers and counsel counsellors," that their course of government shall bless their subjects.

3. We are taught in this passage that Christians are to regard

their civil duties and the welfare of their country, as a part of their religious obligations and responsibilities. They are so to deport themselves in their offices of holy living and prayer, as to bless mankind here, as well as hereafter. And if it be the duty of Christians to pray for those in authority, because rulers have a great influence on the weal or woe of their country, it may also be the duty of religious teachers to define, illustrate, and enforce the duties men owe to their country, as a part of the duties demanded by God. This I purpose to do this evening.

4. We learn from the text who are the best rulers, and who the happiest subjects. Those are the best rulers who so rule that their subjects, "lead quiet and peaceable lives in all Godliness and honesty." "Quiet and peaceable lives in all Godliness and honesty," suppose the protection of just laws, property, person, freedom and life made secure, and the subject himself estimating these blessings, pursuing a course of conduct marked by justice, temperance, moderation, benevolence and piety.

When these ends are secured, a nation has the highest tokens of God's favor.

The topics started directly, or by inference, from the text, suggest rich materials for thought and illustration, but I do not now purpose to dwell upon them in detail. I have suggested them not only because they sustain the main principles for which I shall contend, but because they afford license to the sacred desk for the discussion of these principles.

In this discourse I propose, without obligation to any logical arrangement, to discuss generally, the following topics.

What are the *essentials of national happiness and prosperity*?

What were the peculiar responsibilities of those who proclaimed our independence sixty-nine years since, and sustained it against a foreign power, and what are the duties peculiarly devolving on us to enrich and perpetuate our national blessings?

What lessons have been furnished to this nation by the life and death of one whose recent departure has aroused public attention and sympathy.

I can of course but briefly touch points of such magnitude.

What are the *essentials of national happiness and prosperity*?

Negatively, national happiness and prosperity do not depend on *extent of territory*. It is indeed requisite, that our territory should furnish fair scope for private enterprise and universal sustenance, but when we have already a domain which gives a plantation to every poor man who can invest two hundred dollars for its purchase—when our territory embraces the great rivers which conduct our commerce to the broad sea—when our climate is varied enough north and south to furnish the productions of every latitude—when our territory is large enough to embrace the resources of men and

means to defend us from foreign aggression—it is obvious we have no motive for conquest or acquisition.

2. Great *wealth* is not an essential ingredient of national happiness. All experience tells us that the middle condition of society is the happiest. Great wealth tends to excessive and morbid refinement and indulgence—it tempts to avarice, idleness, profligacy and licentiousness. The palmy days of Rome, of Tyre, of Babylon, were their days of enterprise and relative poverty. When they compelled the world to pour its riches into their bosoms, they sunk into the dead and putrid sea of effeminate and animalized luxury.

3. National happiness does not consist in great *military and naval* strength. True we need the power to defend our rights and interests, but beyond this our indefinite preparation of the instruments of death, only tempts to national bravado, to the lust of power and conquest, to oppression and legalized murder.

We have seen what are not essential to national happiness and prosperity. We are now prepared positively to state what are such essentials. And here allow me to make the very obvious remark, that a nation is not an abstraction, in distinction from the individuals of which it is composed. That is a happy nation in which there is the greatest amount of personal, social, family and neighborhood, felicity. It is obvious, then, that those causes which minister to the greatest good of individuals are the real essentials of national prosperity. The moral, social and pecuniary degradation of the individuals of a nation, is the degradation of the nation itself, no matter what may be the form of its government, or the loftiness of its pretensions. Keeping this principle in mind, I remark that the first essential to *national happiness is civil and religious freedom.* God has made man a free moral agent, and designed him to act for himself, under the influence of self-love and religious duty.

There is nothing which human nature more covets than liberty. Take away from a man the consciousness of freedom and the right of self-government—assume that he is born to be the slave of the interest, ease and pleasure of kings or petty tyrants and he feels degraded below the level of his race. The world becomes to him a prison—large, indeed, but sombre and hateful. The slave of despots may go to his task, but those cheering anticipations of benefit to himself and family, which lighten the burdens of labor, he can never know. The slave may eat and drink and dance in his chains, but his enjoyments are animalized, like those of the brute, to whose condition he is degraded.

Give a man liberty and he covets knowledge. Occupying his natural and Heaven-appointed condition of liberty, he loves light because it reveals his blessings and aids his aspirings, like the soaring bird that rises and floats in the airy element which God has

made its own. On the other hand, enslave a man, and he covets ignorance, like the mariner who closes his eyes against the vision of deadly rocks that he cannot shun. Where have new discoveries in science and new inventions in the arts originated? Almost always among the free, who expected to reap the results of their genius. Slavery is a most bitter curse, because it leaves man with his wants, his woes and his labors, but takes away the motives designed to soften the burdens of human life. In this land we are blessed with liberty, and it deserves all the eulogies which fourth of July orators have poured upon it. I have only to regret tnat our songs of joy, even in this land of freedom, are interrupted y the clanking chains of two millions of slaves. May God open the way for their final and safe emancipation!

II.—*A second requisite to national happiness is individual industry in some useful occupation.*—The wealth of a nation is made up of the earnings of individuals. If any individual, by industry and carefulness in business, accumulate beyond his own necessities, present and prospective, he is to remember that the decrepid, the sick, the imbecile and aged poor, the helpless widow, the friendless orphan, are to be sustained by the savings of the young, the healthful and the enterprising—so that no man has an apology for idleness. An idle man usually sinks to a vagrant. An idle family, whatever may be its present wealth, is on a rapid pilgrimage to vice, crime, beggary and contempt.

A nation, relinquishing industry and slow gains to embark in grasping speculation, presents a spectacle about as amiable, happy and hopeful as the gambling fraternities in our low grog-shops.

Every man, young or old, who spends time in idleness, would do well to remember that he is a missionary of moral corruption and universal beggary—that, if his example were imitated, we should have no country—or if we retained an empire, it would be a continent of darkness, pollution and vice. The Pharisee "thanked God he was not like other men." Our idler, rich or poor, fashionable or unfashionable, may reverse this, and thank God that others are not like *him*.

He who covets food, shelter and life's luxuries, without the industry to labor or the self-denial to save, has begun an apprenticeship to fraud and theft. When a nation is made up of such, it is unfit for liberty, and may covet the advent of an energetic despot as a boon from God.

III.—A third essential to national prosperity and happiness is *Temperance*. How wide-spread has been the prevalence of intemperance in our land! It has absorbed more money than all the expense of our revolution—all the outlay of our second war with Great Britain. It has absorbed more money than all our

academies, colleges—all our bible and missionary associations—all our hospitals and asylums. It has wrung this money from aged parents to gratify the appetite of profligate sons, and from the worn, weary, heart-sick wife and starving children, to gratify the diseased craving of a debased husband and father. This money has gone to fill the pockets of men who added nothing to the common stock of national wealth by their employment, but who first plucked their victims and then kicked them into the street. And have we lost nothing but money by this vice? The pilot has quaffed the cup, and, in the madness of intoxication, run his vessel at a great waste of life upon the deadly rock. From ships and steamboats, from stages and rail-road cars, from a thousand parts of our land, the shriek of fear and woe has come, because those entrusted with the safety of life had perpetrated reckless murder by sacrificing myriads to their own love of the cup.

And is the moral ruin of the victims of intemperance nothing? Who of us have not blushed at the degradation of some relative? Who of us have not visited the premature, sad grave of some relative, the victim of intemperance?

Now we must not, on the 4th of July, throw up our hats and shout that our fathers saved us from "a *three-cent tax on tea*," while we are coldly indifferent to the more cruel slavery which has ground to the dust hundreds of thousands of our citizens.

What tyrant on a throne, ever wrung from a living victim his health, his reason, his good affections, his self-respect, his reputation, his property, his industry and his undying soul?

Nero was merciful compared to this. Thank God, 80,000 of these victims have broken the yoke of the tyrant, and stand erect in the dignity of human nature and under the rainbow of hope.

But we must watch this cause. Our tongues will falter in their rejoicing over liberty till we see our country safe from intemperance. And we even shall distrust all pretensions to patriotism or philanthropy, which coldly regard the effort to make our country happy by making its citizens sober.

IV.—Another element of national happiness is *a spirit of peace and order*. We know how odious and how painful is the spirit of strife, contention, hatred and violence in a family or neighborhood. We know how malice embitters the enjoyment of an individual by gnawing the heart that cherishes it. Hence, we know that a nation, under the influence of a spirit of war and violence, is not only guilty, but miserable—not only robbed of communion with God, but hindered from the exercise of those sweet charities of the heart, which ennoble and bless a human soul. The spirit of war may for a time find its victims in foreign lands, but it nourishes a tiger thirst for human blood, which, sooner or later, leads to the carnage of civil war, when citizen butchers citizen. We ask that *our* po-

litical and religious opinions shall be treated with respect and toleration—we ask for the liberty to worship God, not only without fear of violence, but without opprobrium. We ask that our houses shall be safe from fear, so that our wives and children may rejoice around the domestic hearth and altar. We desire that all should cherish towards us sentiments of kindness and good-will. We must remember that we are no better than our race—that other men, and other families, and other nations, have the same desire and capacity for safety and enjoyment. If we ask for blessings at the hands of others, we should be as willing to grant as to take. To hate and injure others, of whatever nation or creed, is to break down those barriers which protect us and ours from violence and death. The right of self-defence we all admit. The duty to be prepared to resist wrong inflicted by another nation, may be as imperative as our duty to resist the midnight assassin. Still, I contend that the best protection of a nation against insult and injury, is the spirit of justice and peace. Who are the men that pass through life with universal respect and kindness? The peaceful and the just. Who is the man that is complaining of insults at home and abroad—of insults at parties—on railroads, in steamboats, and everywhere else? It is the man who is over jealous of his dignity—the man whose disposition to encroach on others, disposes others to encroach on him—the man whose ready appeal to personal violence tempts others to inflict violence on him.

He who should refuse to give way to others in Chesnut-street, would soon raise a mob. Jostling others, he would provoke the same spirit to jostle him, until he would be borne down by numbers. Let him courteously yield to others, and others will cheerfully give way for him. Men mirror back the temper we present.

In the Southwest, all are armed, expecting insults, and they soon find them. Here, we assume, that others are disposed to respect our rights, and they seldom disappoint us. The Empire of Rome, in the spirit of aggression, stretched her armies to the cold North, and stirred up the power that stung her to death. Napoleon nourished the spirit of war in France, until fear and hate brought at last a power from without to crush his empire. Great Britain is holding the world in fear. May she take warning by the fate of her rival. We are so insulated, that a peaceful spirit is safe as well as beautiful. If we teach our growing millions to love war, we shall rue it at last. "They that take the sword shall perish by the sword."

We want not tens of thousands of our young men to be corrupted by the camp; we want not the waste of millions of our own in efforts to waste the life and property of others; we want no flaming cities; no vessels exploded, and sinking, amid the cries of dying sailors; we want no wail of widows and orphans, over husbands and fathers prematurely slain; we want no interrupted in-

dustry, ruined commerce and down-trodden harvests; we want no battle-fields, shrieking with the wounded and slippery with gore; we want no war.

V. A fifth element of national prosperity and happiness, is the *universal prevalence of intellectual, moral and religious cultivation*. Let intellectual light be diffused, that the millions of our land may *know* their rights and their duties, social and religious. Let the truth of God be diffused to furnish those millions with the disposition and the motives to *do* their duty. The grand office of leading minds in 1776, was to rouse the mass of this nation to resist a foreign foe. They succeeded. Sixty-nine years of nationat existence and enlargement have raised us to an elevation above the fear of foreign enemies.

We have wrested the sceptre of government from a foreign despot, and reposed it where it ought to be, in the hands of the majority of this nation. Our destiny is no longer in the power of one man, but millions. If one man governed us, we should ask, with awful emphasis, what is his character? If millions govern us, we may, with equal emphasis, ask what *is*, and is to be, the character of those millions? Are they educated? Are they moral? Are they patriotic? Do they fear God and respect the great principles of righteousness? Who does not see the pertinence of these questions? Who that loves his country does not feel their importance? It is obvious, that while the grand mission of the Revolution was to battle down foreign domination, by fanning the spirit of martial feeling and resistance to tyranny, our great office, in the 69th year of independence, is, through the spirit of peace and universally diffused light, to educate into right principles and right action the millions who hold here the sceptre of power.

The revolution demanded the cultivation of the stronger passions—the nourishing of a sense of wrong, and the martial spirit to resist wrong. Now we need the passions to be soothed, lest they break out in violence on ourselves. Now we need to cultivate the intellect, the conscience and the heart, that men may "lead quiet and peaceable lives in all godliness and honesty."

The patriotism of the Revolution found its highest development, in hazarding life and property to defend the country. The high office of the distinguished patriot now is "fulfilled, by the exhibition of an example" of industry, temperance, self-control, of warm domestic affections, and love of public order in subjection to the laws of God and man—and of large and willing charters to diffuse that moral education, which shall elevate this entire nation to the practice of the same virtues.

The Revolution demanded agitation and exertions. We then asked for great changes. We have now gained our freedom and the means to defend it. Our true interest can now best be secured

by tranquillity and repose. We then had everything to gain by excitement and revolution. Now we have everything to lose.

A very remote predecessor in this pulpit, the Rev. Dr. Duffield, was associated with Bishop White as Chaplain to the Continental Congress. He was also for a time Chaplain in the Continental army. He made these old walls resound seventy years ago, with exhortations to the male members of this congregation to take up arms for their country. On a Sabbath morning, when the British were approaching, he told them he was "sorry to see so many yet at home."

It is now my duty, after seventy years, to exhort you to make similar great and patriotic sacrifices, to plant schools, academies, colleges and churches, in every destitute neighborhood, and to give your personal example and labors, to the great work of educating the youthful generation, that they, by their virtues, may be worthy to hold the inestimable blessing purchased by the blood of their fathers.

Dr. Duffield here prayed for the success of our arms in war. It is your duty and mine now to pray for the spirit of peace to be breathed over this great nation, that the arts of peace may beautify and enrich our domain from the sands of the Atlantic to the mild waves of the Pacific Ocean.

I must say here, although somewhat out of place, that our late President Jackson was always the warm friend and frequent patron of religious education. When the Rev. Samuel J. Mills was on a missionary tour to the West, his horse died, near Nashville. A great loss for a poor missionary. He was the guest of General Jackson, who promptly gave him another and better horse, as a mark of friendship to the cause.

A clergyman, now in New York city, of the highest standing, told me a few days since that when he was on a tour in Tennessee, twenty-five years ago or more, to obtain pecuniary means to build up the Presbyterian Theological Seminary at Maryville, Gen. Jackson was his best auxiliary. He gave him one hundred dollars most cheerfully, and volunteered a letter to all his friends in the South and West, urging the building up of such seminaries, as indispensable to the well-being of the country. Such testimony on such a point is valuable.

The grand instrument of national salvation in the revolution was the army, brave to defend their homes and their country. The grand instrument of saving this land now from idleness, intemperance, fraud and violence, and ultimate despotism, is the Church of God embraced in the various religious denominations. Her prayers are to propitiate Heaven's anger. Her active benevolence in good works, in promoting education and true religion, is to be the foundation of our national morality and prosperity. The moral virtues of no nation rise above its religion. When the

army of the revolution faltered in courage and self-sacrifice, the genius of our nation grew pale with fear and wept in sadness. When the Church of God in this land becomes self-indulgent, proud, sectarian and temporizing, forgetful of her high office, as Heaven's almoner of light and purity, angels in heaven might weep over a presage of national abandonment and sin. You will remember that in the most perplexing period of Gen. Jackson's administration, when clouds lowered over the whole political horizon, he was daunted by none of these things, but said "his greatest trouble was the schism in his favorite denomination—the Presbyterian Church." Partisans jeered him for this, accused him of hypocrisy, but is there any reason to doubt that his sagacious intellect saw that what impaired the influence of Christianity struck a blow at national morality and safety?

Patriotism and piety might now mourn over the religious apathy, not of a single denomination, but of this entire land. As the practice and enjoyment of religion is absolutely indispensable to the true happiness of each individual of the nation, that cannot be called a truly prosperous nation which is not increasing in the favor of God.

I propose now to advert to some lessons taught to this nation by the life and death of one of the most prominent of our citizens. As the death of any man under God's providence is a fair subject for pulpit discussion—as the President of these United States has officially called the attention of the nation to the decease of his distinguished predecessor—and as the individual himself bore a remarkable character both in life and death, I make no apology for introducing the name of Andrew Jackson on this occasion. As I shall express my honest convictions, with a desire to give no offence to any human being, by invading the political prejudices of any, I hope for your candid attention. With political creeds I have no concern here, but as the name of Andrew Jackson has an influence with millions, it is desirable to see how far it prompts to truth and virtue.

Andrew Jackson began life amid the storms of the revolution, when the war spirit was most rife in the land. He spent his whole life in a section of country where not to resent injury is to lose caste in society. He was a soldier for his country, and thus forced by duty into scenes of bloodshed. He was a man not only of singular sagacity, but of strong and quick passions—full of the chivalry of the military profession. He was not a professed Christian until he had retired from public life. Taking all these circumstances into account, it is not wonderful that there should have always been in his character an irritability under opposition and an occasional violence of language and manner which we, trained among calmer scenes and under a more steady and consistent Christian influence, must condemn. But an orphan at fourteen

years of age, first a soldier in the revolutionary army—then a prisoner in the British camp—then an emigrant at twenty-one, to sojourn in the Western wilderness among treacherous savages and lawless associates, had few opportunities to study the doctrine of Christian meekness and forbearance.

I was told by a distinguished gentleman of Tennessee, then an elder in the Presbyterian church, that in early times, when a howling wilderness of 150 miles in extent, filled with savages, separated Nashville settlement, then in North Carolina, from Lexington settlement, then in Western Virginia, they were accustomed to form caravans for mutual safety in threading this wilderness. One of these caravans, made up mostly of young men, among whom was Jackson, started from Nashville for Lexington, having a woman in charge going to join her husband in Lexington. The lady was taken sick the second night. In the morning several of the young men arose, saddled their horses and were about to leave, when, young Jackson asked what they were about to do? Would they leave a woman to perish alone in the wilderness? They were impatient, reckless, afraid perhaps of Indians on their track. They said they must go on. Jackson levelled his rifle and declared he would kill the first man that put his foot in the stirrup; thus he brought them to a stand. They agreed to wait a day—the lady was then able to travel, and they reached Lexington in safety. This shows the kind of associates around young Jackson, and the kind of bearing which he came to regard as chivalrous and necessary.

We must judge such a man by his circumstances, not by ours; and tried by this standard, I think, what Walter Scott said of a Covenanter was true of Andrew Jackson. "His faults were those of his times and associates; his virtues were eminently his own." I may here in candor say that some of the leading measures of his civil administration I did not approve. The removal of the Cherokee Indians from their homes I resisted with my pen, and have often denounced it in this congregation. But I then believed, and I now believe, that no President since the days of Washington ever carried to the Presidential chair a more patriotic and honest heart.

Whether a measure were popular or unpopular—whether his friends approved or opposed—if he thought it right, he urged it without regard to personal consequences.

If a measure were too unpopular to be touched by his friends, he threw himself into the breach and shouldered the responsibility. This course, so far above the truckling, time-serving course of mere selfish and heartless demagogues of all parties, took the nation by surprise. The nature of his measures, and the energy of his will, excited, in many, fear, but all felt the power of this moral courage—of this abandonment of self, and many, while they dreaded

the effect of the measures, felt an increased admiration of the sincerity of the man.

This conviction of the sincerity of General Jackson, of his willingness to do what he believed the good of the country demanded, without respect to friend or foe, was one element of his great popularity. Mankind love a sincere and resolute character, and I hope politicians will learn from the example of General Jackson that "honesty is the best policy," while perhaps he himself would have been more wise had he sometimes lent a more open ear to the counsels of his judicious friends.

The sanction which the early example and the great name of General Jackson gave to duelling we must all deplore.

But we must remember that in office he struck at once from the rolls of the navy the names of two officers who had engaged in a duel, showing that his riper judgment disapproved the violence of his youth. In the early part of his last sickness, he said, "*May my enemies find peace*"—"may the liberty of my country endure for ever." This was the spirit in which he died, the spirit which I hope all his friends will cultivate.

General Jackson's defects were as open as his virtues. He concealed nothing, and the eyes of millions watched his errors. I will palliate none.

But among his defects known to this nation, has he ever shrunk at any sacrifice to discharge every pecuniary obligation? He once exchanged a delightful villa for a home in the wilderness to pay the debts assumed for a friend. Has he ever sought wealth by gambling, fraud, or overreaching in trade, or by speculating in office? Has he ever been accused of seducing innocence from the paths of virtue, or rioting in low debauchery? Has he ever shrunk in bearing his testimony to the value of temperance and religion? Has he ever neglected the poor to flatter the rich? Has he ever refused a well authenticated claim on his charity, whether from friend or foe? whether for an object secular or religious? Has he ever forgotten a friend in adversity, or received at the hands of any one an obligation which he did not endeavor to discharge? Has he ever forborne to bear his testimony to the truth and value of the Christian religion, or absented himself on the Sabbath from the worship of Almighty God? Has he ever failed to treat with kindness ministers of the gospel—to open his house and his purse to such as were in poverty and want? Has he not again and again sacrificed ease, and home, and money, and put in peril reputation and life to defend his country?

If with so many claims to national respect and gratitude, it be still true that the prompt decision, powerful will and ardent temper, which made him one of the greatest military commanders of this or any age, sometimes tempted him to precipitation, violence

and obstinacy, it only shows that he was a man, and, like other men, liable to err.

We cannot have the strength of the wind to swell our sails without a liability to tempests—nor the warmth of fire without danger of conflagrations. So neither can we find in man great abilities and energy for good without corresponding infelicities. To this our great Washington alone seems to have been an exception. It is enough to excite our best feelings in view of the death of Jackson, if we can *all* say—as I believe we can—that in spite of the defects, moral or political, imputed to him, he had a lofty patriotism—a large, honest and brave heart, and the ends "he aimed at were his country's!"

It was not till the storms of his public life were over that he gave his attention practically to religion. The influence of a pious mother left always on his mind a firm faith in Christianity, and a profound reverence for its doctrines and institutions; but, like too many others, he procrastinated the great duty of "repentance towards God and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ."

When in Cincinnati, fifteen years ago, a beautiful young lady asked him to write in her album. He wrote—

"When I can read my title clear
To mansions in the skies,
I'll bid farewell to all my fears,
And wipe my weeping eyes."

ANDREW JACKSON.

Politicians saw in this, cant, pretence or imbecility. Those that knew Gen. Jackson's early life, saw in it the principles of piety planted by a departed mother and struggling in a masculine intellect and conscience, with the excitements and temptations of the world.

While at Washington, President Jackson has often sent for clergymen, visiting the city, to conduct prayer in his family. This showed his respect for religion at that period, and renders his subsequent conversion less wonderful. About seven years ago he united with the Presbyterian Church in Nashville, of which the Rev. Dr. Edgar is pastor.

Dr. Edgar, at his grave, gave a touching account of his conversion to God, and bore testimony that in the church he had developed a *consistent Christian character*. Convinced of his duty to serve God by a public profession, he stood up before the world, as a disciple of Christ. We only regret, as he doubtless regretted, that he had not thus consecrated himself early in life.

I. His death, though in the course of nature, teaches us first, *how vain is all earthly good*. Gen. Jackson had all the world could give him of office and honor. He lived almost four-score years, but "all the world gave, it has taken away." His ear is

deaf to human applause. He moulders like the beggar in his shroud. The strong arm is palsied—the stout heart is still—the voice which has moved armies, and agitated a continent, is silent. What a lesson does this read to earthly ambition—how humbling to human pride.

The deceased took this humbling view of death, when he refused to have his remains laid in a sarcophagus, which three thousand years had spared, and the partiality of friends had presented. "Let me be buried" said he, "in the earth—by the remains of my beloved companion. I wish to be buried in a plain, unostentatious manner, without any pomp."

His epitaph, fixed upon by himself, is:

"ANDREW JACKSON,
BORN 15TH OF MARCH, 1767,
DIED 8TH OF JUNE, 1845."

He would not mock the humiliation of the grave, by attempting to garnish it with earthly splendor. He would let death utter its scornful and unbroken rebuke of human pride, avarice and ambition.

II. *The death scene of Gen. Jackson shows our need of religion.*—The light which cheered his pilgrimage through the dark valley was no reflected glory from splendid victories and lofty political stations. The huzzas of millions made no music for his dying ear. If he found peace then, and he did find it, it was in the evidence that God had forgiven his sins and renewed his heart. It will be so with us. We toil and strive for the world, but in dying, all the treasure that will avail us will be the hope of God's favor and eternal life.

III.—*The death scene of General Jackson discloses a motive to begin early to serve God and our generation.*—On the Sabbath, two weeks before he died, the Lord's supper was administered in the Presbyterian church near his residence. Unable to go out, he desired "once more" to receive the sacrament in his chamber. At the close, he said "when I have suffered sufficiently the Lord will take me to himself, but what are my sufferings compared to my Saviour who died for me on the accursed tree."

On the Sabbath, the day he died, he first fainted and was suppose to be dead, but revived. He called all his little grand-children and the members of his family—took each of his grand-children by the hand and blessed and kissed all. He told them they had good parents—to keep the Sabbath and read the Testament. "Where," he says, "is my daughter Mary? God will take care of you for me. I am my God's. I belong to him. I go but a short

time before you." His grand-children began to cry. "What is the matter my dear children? Have I alarmed you? O do not cry—be good children and we shall all meet in Heaven." Turning to the servants he said—"I want to meet you all, *white and black*, in Heaven." Having exhorted them in an eloquent strain for half an hour, he sunk away and calmly expired.

What an affecting and sublime spectacle! The aged soldier and statesman, the idol of half the nation is slowly expiring. He has but a few hours to live, he is all weakness and pain, but he rouses himself from the gathering torpor of death and for half an hour gives eloquent counsel to all "to prepare to meet God." If children and youth and servants needed such counsel from his lips, they need it from ours. If conscience will not let us die in peace without discharging our duty in this respect, let us begin early and in our days of health beseech all around us to be reconciled to God.

General Jackson would take the sacrament in his sick chamber. He asked it as a privilege. Who in health then are justified in neglecting this ordinance as it is administered before them in the sanctuary? Let us learn the virtues of a death bed while we have health to exercise those virtues in acts of piety.

I thank God that he led General Jackson in the face of this nation to honor in his last years and hours, the Bible—the Sabbath, the church and its sacraments—and the great doctrine of salvation alone through the atonement of Calvary. We hope those who loved him will hasten to follow this his final example.

He was always a brave man, but he achieved his greatest triumph when he humbled his pride at the foot of the cross, and gained a hope which gave him *victory over death.*

His military and civil renown, may fade amid the mists of coming ages, but God grant that his noble and impressive testimony to the truth and value of the christian religion, may live in the hearts of men, until the pillars of this great globe shall crumble, and time itself be no more. Amen.

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SERMON CCCCV.

A SERMON DELIVERED IN FRYEBURG, ME., JUNE 24, 1845, BEFORE THE MAINE "CONGREGATIONAL CHARITABLE SOCIETY."

BY REV. E. THURSTON,

PASTOR OF THE SOUTH CHURCH IN HALLOWELL, ME.

THE MAGNITUDE OF THE MINISTERIAL WORK.

"I am doing a great work, so that I cannot come down."—Neh. vi. 3.

Nehemiah had undertaken to rebuild Jerusalem. He found its walls broken down, and its gates consumed with fire. The sight deeply affected his heart. "He sat down and wept and mourned certain days, and fasted and prayed before the God of heaven." But tears and fasting did not satisfy him. He aroused himself and went to work to repair the ruin of his beloved city. In this undertaking he encountered formidable opposition. The enemy derided, scorned, threatened. Yet he was not to be turned aside. He prosecuted the enterprise till it was nearly completed. Seeing that direct opposition availed nothing, his opposers changed their mode of attack. They proposed to meet him, for friendly consultation, on the plain of Ono. But he understood the stratagem. "They think to do me mischief," said he. "I shall not meet them. They are enemies in disguise." Accordingly, he dispatched messengers to say in his name, "I am doing a great work, so that I cannot come down." Thus, their iniquitous design was defeated.

There is a spiritual, as there was a literal Jerusalem to be built. Its ruins are to be raised up, its wastes repaired. The ministers of Christ are the *Nehemiahs* in this work. They have walked about Zion, marked her desolation, and mourned and fasted and prayed over it. They love her gates and her towers—even her ruins are precious in their eyes. Never can they forget her welfare or her woe. While she remains a desolation, like the captive Jews by the stream of Babylon, they are despondent and sad. Still they live upon the promise that she shall one day rise and

shine, her light being come, and the glory of the Lord having risen upon her. They are earnestly watching for the dawning of that day. To whatever will hasten its coming, they have consecrated their energies and life. But, like Nehemiah, *they* too meet with opposition. Sometimes the enemy derides, and scornfully inquires, "What do these feeble Jews? Will they revive the stones out of these heaps of rubbish which are burnt?" At other times, finding all their contempt in vain, they seek to beguile them from their steadfastness, and challenge them to come down, for worldly purposes, from their high, moral position. And it furnishes occasion for gratitude to God, that so often their proposals are met with the reply, *We are doing a great work, and cannot come down.*

This work, in the broad sense in which I propose to consider it, embraces *the glory of God in the salvation of men.*

First. I shall ask you to look at its *magnitude.* We are doing a *great work.*

That it is emphatically a *work* many need not be told. At this age of the world, and in this country especially, the ministry is no sinecure—no place for the sluggard or the voluptuary. Its demands are highly exhausting and self-denying. This fact, the early failure and fall of many of its incumbents cannot fail to impress upon such as have not been taught it by their own experience. If any man enters the ministry from motives of personal ease, he will soon discover his mistake. It is a calling in which toil or failure is inevitable. But this is not our point. I was to speak of the *magnitude* of the work.

I. It is great in its *object.* Indeed, in extent and boldness of design, it has no parallel among all the enterprises on earth. The changes and revolutions it contemplates surpass, in importance and grandeur, everything within the range of human conception. It proposes, through the mighty power of God, to change darkness to light, bring good out of evil, make the dead alive in Christ—to transform the rebel into an ally—the barren desert into a fruitful field—a world of wretchedness and tears into the paradise of God. By the humblest instrumentalities, by the foolishness of preaching, by the simple story of the cross, it aims to overturn the kingdom of darkness, defeat the powers of hell, root out from the earth all the Protean forms of error, break down every system of false religion, and substitute, in their place, the spiritual worship and service of God, and at length, when the purposes of mercy shall have fully ripened, to usher in the day of millennial glory, and send the echo round the globe, Now have "the kingdoms of this world become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ, and he shall reign for ever and ever." How lofty, how sublime such an aim! If it sought only to save a single soul, it were a higher, worthier object, than any for which kings ever contended

or conquerors fought. Indeed, all the exclusively worldly enterprises projected since the creation are nothing compared with the exalted endeavor to raise a single soul to heaven. What, then, must be the loftiness of the aim, when instead of one, it seeks to save thousands and millions—a great number which no man can number—*all* that countless throng given to Christ in the covenant of redemption? Who can fully understand it? It is an object in sympathy with the plan of God in creating, storing and upholding the world, in giving the Son of his love to die, in dispensing, from age to age, the treasure of his grace—an object, so high and glorious, that when it shall be fully attained, and all its vast results unfolded and perfected, the infinite Redeemer himself, looking back on the bitter travail of his soul on earth, shall be fully and forever satisfied. In a word, for it comes to this, the object of the ministerial work is the same high and transcendant object which God had in view in the plan of redemption.

II. It is a work great in *difficulties*. This unavoidably follows from the previous proposition. Such mighty changes as have been alluded to, are not easily wrought. To raise dry bones to life, clothe them with flesh and sinews, breathe into them the breath of life—to mould a vessel of wrath into a vessel of mercy—to pass from the individual to the multitude, and bring the mass of the community into harmony with truth, and into subjection to God, so that their views and aims shall be shaped and controlled by the power of the gospel, this, by a mind acquainted with the inveterate depravity of human nature, can be regarded in no other light than as a work of extreme difficulty. No man can look with a truly philosophical eye upon the moral renovation of the world, without discovering obstacles such as never opposed the progress of any other cause. Heathen altars are to be demolished—heathen idols given to the moles and bats—new customs introduced—a new standard of conduct established—old things to pass away, all things to become new—crooked places to be made straight, rough places plain, every valley to be exalted and every hill made low, the desert to blossom as the rose and streams to break out in the wilderness, in a word, the ruins of the apostacy to be repaired and the world brought back to its original harmony, beauty and holiness. Think of such a change, opposed by the whole current of usage, prejudice, ignorance, depravity, and in some instances law, and say, can anything compare with it for difficulty of achievement?

But I shall be met here, perhaps, with the reply, that this is the work of God, and not of man, and with God all things are possible, all things easy. We admit it. And yet God works by means. He causes these changes, he accomplishes these amazing revolutions through the agency of the ministry. Men do not believe in him of whom they have not heard. They do not hear without a

preacher. Faith cometh by hearing. The preaching of Christ crucified, though to the Jews a stumbling-block, and to the Greeks foolishness, yet to them that are called, both Jews and Greeks, it is the power of God and the wisdom of God. It is the saving of the soul, and is to be the saving of the world.

And in the divine plan so intimate is the connection between human efforts and the redemption of men, that the same qualities are requisite in the ministry as though the work were all of man. Weak, vapid preaching—an unskilful handling of the word of life, will not do. He that winneth souls must be wise He must know how rightly to divide the word—a workman that needeth not to be ashamed—mighty in the scriptures, magnifying his office, and able to preach in demonstration of the Spirit, and with power. This brings me to some of the more specific difficulties of preaching the gospel, so as to make it effective and saving.

1. One great difficulty in this work, is, to arrest attention and awaken interest. It is the *first* obstacle that presents itself. It meets us at the very threshold of every effort. We are sent into a valley of dry bones, to prophesy upon the slain. We speak to those who are dead to spiritual objects. They have eyes but they see not—ears, but they hear not—hearts have they, but they feel not the powers of the world to come. The most cogent argument does not convince them; the most fervid appeal does not move them. The law, with its premonitions of wrath, the cross with its utterances of mercy, heaven with its proffered joys, and hell with its threatened woes, is each devoid of power either to awe or win them. They are heard like an idle tale. The reason is obvious. They have no *heart* to these things.

2. Superadded to this, is another difficulty of an opposing character. They are *all heart* to other things—wholly engrossed with the objects of sense. Every moment is pre-engaged, every energy overtasked in the pursuit of worldly good. They will rise up early, sit up late, eat the bread of carefulness, and compass sea and land to increase their earthly store. They have farms, merchandise, houses or friends demanding a perpetual and hurried pursuit. From the beginning to the close of the week, all is incessant care and toil for the things that perish. In this over-burdened state of mind and heart they come up, on the Sabbath, to the house of God, to hear our message. What an auditory! The body, well attired, is there; the heart, the very thing with which we have to do, somewhere else. What other man on earth is called to address so unpromising an audience? You go into a court-room, where a few dollars and pence are at stake, and all is wakeful interest; you go to a political gathering, and the same is true, there. There is life, zeal, enthusiasm. Men take their hearts with them. They have an object, and how are they straitened till it be accomplished! But to the sanctuary of the Lord, whither the tribes go up to wor-

ship, and God comes down to bless, and angels bend their eager flight—to a place where heaven and hell, Christ and the soul, are the momentous themes—where the destiny for eternity may be unalterably sealed—to a place like this, men go, to sleep, to dream, to spend a listless hour, to see and be seen, to be *acted upon*, as by galvanic influence, or not moved at all. Who does not see the difficulty of the preacher's task before such an auditory? How can he arouse to consciousness, and keep awake till his message is uttered, the slumbering crowd that has gathered about him? He dare not attempt it by tricks of oratory, by catering to the vitiated taste of a corrupt heart, or by any fanciful inventions of his own. His instructions are too clearly defined, his message too weighty and grave to admit of any such expedient. And yet his auditors *must be aroused*, their consciences reached, and their hearts stirred, or his ministry is unproductive of any saving result, and they are lost. Men will not hear till they awake; they will not think till they hear; they will not feel till they think; they will not act till they feel; they will not be saved till they act. This speaking from Sabbath to Sabbath to ears dull of hearing—this prophesying from year to year in Ezekiel's valley of bones—this having men sleep while we are uncovering the pit and portraying heaven before them, is surely unprofitable to them and deeply painful to us. But how can we prevent it? A deeper compassion for souls, a higher concern for God's glory, a more vigorous realizing faith might add power and pathos to our utterances and measurably correct the evil, but could not entirely remove it. The holiest men that have ever took part in this ministry, and even He who spake as never man spake, contended with the same difficulty before us. They found those who put the word of God from them, judged themselves unworthy of everlasting life, knew not the things that belonged to their peace, and they were grieved for the hardness of their hearts, and wept over the ruin which was coming upon them.

3. This difficulty however, appalling as it is, is by no means the only one we have to encounter. The word which we preach is to be rightly and skilfully *divided*—adapted with discriminating care to the varied characters and wants of those we address. Each is to have his portion in due season. Strong meat is not to be given to babes, nor milk to those of full age. Of some we are to have compassion, *making a difference*, and others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire. An *indiscriminate* ministration of the word is opposed to every dictate of sound reason, as well as to all the principles of analogy. We minister to a world spiritually diseased. The whole head is sick, the whole heart faint. In this respect all are alike. In the stage and symptoms of the great disease, however, there is an almost infinite diversity. In such circumstances, the minister is called to act. He goes with the gospel of Jesus Christ in his hand. If wisely administered and divinely at-

tended it is a sovereign remedy—a sure restorative. But there must be definite prescription, discriminative appliance, or it will prove about as salutary as those nostrums which are pledged to cure all diseases, and, in fact, cure none.

An indefinite style of preaching may make a class of indefinite Christians, but it is sure to leave them unconverted to the practical details of religion. No mistake can be greater than to suppose that the gospel will cure farther or faster than it is specifically applied. The history of the past ought to satisfy us on this point. Time was, for example, and not long since, when the entire church was unconverted to the obvious duty of sending the gospel to the heathen—unconverted to strict temperance and peace principles —unconverted to sound anti-slavery principles. Why was it? Was there less piety in the church then, than there is now? It is so said—perhaps so understood. But I doubt the truth of such a statement. It is bringing a charge against the depth and purity of our fathers' religion which the evidence in the premises will not warrant. If I have read their history aright, in single-heartedness, stability of purpose and zeal for Christ, they were not a whit behind the Christians of the present day. And their deficiency in some of these respects is to be attributed solely to the fact that the gospel had not then been brought to bear directly and forcibly on these points. Their case, therefore, instead of furnishing evidence of want of love towards God or man, is a clear illustration of the urgent necessity of rightly dividing the word, and giving it specific application to every branch of Christian duty.

4. It discloses also another important fact, viz: the necessity of making our message appropriate to the *times in which we live.* The preaching of no previous age can be taken as a complete model for the present. Truth is progressive. The command to the Church,—"*Go forward.*" Her light is to increase, her activities multiply, her prospects extend and brighten, till the latter day glory bursts upon the world, and the light of the moon shall be as the light of the sun, and the light of the sun as the light of seven days." In this advancing state of the Church, her *ministers* must advance. They are to go before, and lead on the sacramental host, as it proceeds from conquering to conquer. Progress, however, always implies *change.* The style and themes of the pulpit, then, must vary somewhat from age to age. While the great principles of the gospel are eternal, and immutable as the throne from which they emanate, nothing of forms and modes can be stereotyped and fixed. The liturgy of the 17th century, will not do for the 19th. The preaching which began the Reformation, will not complete it. As circumstances change, the ministration must change. As the enemy shifts his quarters and varies his mode of attack, we must change our position, and draw new weapons from the armory of truth. We are in conflict with the

powers of darkness—fighting the battles of the Lord. Our movements are to be aggressive, as well as defensive, and everywhere, it is to be understood, that wherever the devil is, there are we, in the name of the Lord, ready to meet him on his own ground, and able to expose his devices whether he comes as an angel of darkness, or an angel of light. But correctly to interpret the signs of the times—wisely to determine the precise phase of truth demanded at a given juncture, and successfully to present and press it, requires no ordinary wisdom. While in this quarter it is said, "Lo here!" and in that, "Lo there!" While one man is clamoring for the exclusive advocacy of this doctrine, another for the incessant urging of that reform, a third decrying all such specifications, and contending for "*the gospel, the gospel*," meaning by that phrase a strain of indiscriminate, general preaching that will meet no existing demand and do little execution—while so many are leagued together to establish a censorship over the ministry, and seem to understand all duty except their own, I say in this state of conflict and confusion, to keep a judgment clear, impartial and independent—to divide rightly and skilfully the truth, swerving neither from fear or favor, is, it must be conceded, a feat of no ordinary difficulty. It requires intellectual penetration, moral courage, independence of character and faith in God such as no man is to be condemned for not perfectly possessing.

5. But the study of times and seasons is not the greatest of the watchman's difficulties. The varieties of character and condition to which he must adapt his message are not less numerous and changing than the signs of the times, and not less difficult to meet. The great generic divisions of character are into saints and sinners, but under these are specific divisions almost without number.

Among the disciples of Christ, there are the bold and the timid. The one afraid of nothing—rushing headlong and uncalled into every scene of peril, the other, afraid of everything, and trembling even at his own shadow.

In the one extreme, we find the hopeful disciple, who sees a bow in every cloud, and lives in perpetual sunshine. In the other the despairer, who makes tears his drink night and day and will always be going to destruction till he finds himself in heaven.

The religion of one man is all emotion. He lays great stress upon what he *feels*, what he *enjoys*. His eyes are a fountain of tears, and his mouth full of shouts and songs. Another's religion is of an opposite stamp. He goes for principle, for action. His favorite watch-words are *right, duty*. One will almost trust to faith without works, the other to works without faith, and both are in no little danger of putting asunder what God hath joined together. These are specimens of the extremes of Christian character.

In the ranks of the wicked, the diversity is no less striking.

On the one hand is the legalist, struggling, through life, to clamber up the burning sides of Sinai, and get to heaven by the deeds of the law. On the other, the contemner of all law, making Christ the minister of sin, and vainly pleading the cross and the blood of atonement as his defence.

One will not repent, because he has ability to do it any moment he pleases. Another because he has never any ability. One does not enter the way of life, because the gate is so strait that he *cannot*, another, because it is so wide that he *need* not.

The doctrine of the divine purposes is the plea for one man's security in sin, the utter disbelief of it, the basis of another's.

One has no part with the people of God and will have none, because they are so rigid and exclusive, another, because they are so lax and latitudinarian.

Thus every diversity of sentiment and character is to be found in these two classes of men. And can argument be needed to prove the extreme difficulty, the almost absolute impossibility of meeting and successfully treating these ever-varying and conflicting cases, as they are found crowded together in the same congregation? How can the hope of the hypocrite be torn away, without breaking the bruised reed and quenching the smoking flax? How can the slumberer be aroused from his guilty sleep, without driving into the regions of despair some desponding inquirer, who was just daring to lift his eyes to the cross? How can we speak comfortably to Jerusalem, without lulling to deeper repose some who have taken sanctuary in her bosom, and say they are Jews and are not? In a word, for I cannot dwell, how can we reach and move one class of our hearers, without danger to the opposite class who are predisposed to take to themselves the truth least intended and least adapted to their case? The task is immensely difficult. It needs the skill of an apostle. The wisdom direct from above. No man unenlightened and undirected by the Omniscient Spirit is sufficient for this service. But,

III. Let me add, our work is also great in *promise*. These numerous and appalling difficulties need not discourage us. The work will progress. With God all things are possible. He will prosper, yea, establish the work of our hands. Jerusalem shall be rebuilt. Her ruins that remain are precious in his eyes. Her walls shall continue to rise, gaining symmetry, strength and beauty, till the top-stone is brought forth with shoutings of grace, grace, unto it. The work undertaken in weakness and trembling, prosecuted amid difficulties and dangers, shall at length be completed in magnificence, power and great glory. God has undertaken for us. He will help us, and that right early. At the brightness of *his* coming, opposition will be nerveless, obstacles vanish like the chaff of the summer-threshing floor, enemies flee affrighted—no weapon formed against us be suffered to prosper.

Things are not always to move on in their present embarrassed and tardy manner. Zion is not always to sit upon the ground and mourn in dust. The day of her redemption draweth nigh. Her prayer shall at length be heard, and God will come down for her deliverance. He will raise up hosts of faithful laborers to help us do this work. He will open wide and ripened fields for them to reap and garner. "How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings," shall yet be chanted in all the waste places of the earth. The watchmen shall lift up the voice together in triumphant song. "They shall see eye to eye." "The Lord shall make bare his holy arm, and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of God." Then will be realized the vision of the revelator in the apocalypse. That mighty angel, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, shall take his great commission from the throne, commence his flight in the midst of heaven, and bend his way and bear his message to every nation and kindred and tongue and people. Zion shall become an eternal excellency, the joy of many generations. "Her sun shall no more go down, neither shall her moon withdraw itself, for the Lord shall be her everlasting light, and the days of her mourning shall be ended." Such shall be the eventual harvest of all our trials, hopes and tears. Our work is *great in its objects—great in its difficulties, and great also in its promised results.*

It is evident therefore,

1. That it makes great *demands* upon those engaged in it. It makes incessant demands upon the minister's *time.* Every hour is burthened with its duties. He must do every thing with dispatch. And after his best endeavors, he is constantly pained to see so much left undone that needs doing. This disciple will get ensnared, that sinner go to the judgment, before he can raise the salutary warning.

There is a perpetual demand upon his *intellectual resources.* No other man is called to speak two or three hours every week before the same auditory, and that too upon subjects in which there is no particular interest, and no man can do it year after year with credit to himself, and profit to his hearers without a vigorous, well replenished mind. The intellectual tax is enormous.

2. This work makes strong demands, also, upon the *heart* of a man. Here I cannot enlarge. I wish however to call attention, for a moment, to the constant draught made upon a minister's *sympathies.* It would be difficult to over-estimate it. In no other calling or profession, in no other walk of life can be found anything like it. He must weep with those that weep, and rejoice with those that rejoice. Few men understand the scope of such a demand. No matter what the state of his own private circumstances and feelings at the time, his heart must be a

perfect *thermometer*, rising and falling according to the state of the atmosphere around it. And so great and sudden are the changes to which it is liable, that it must run up from the lowest to the highest point in the scale in the shortest space of time. The weeper and the rejoicer he often finds living side by side, and before he has had time to wipe away his tears, he must put on a smile. From the bedside of the dying believer, whom he has been attending down to the river of death, and pointing to the celestial visions beyond, till he scarcely knew whether he was in the body or out of it, he goes directly to the festivities of the nuptial ceremony, where he must sympathize as heartily with the living as he did there with the dying, and rejoice now over the consummation of a union, at the dissolution of which, in another case, he had just wept. Thus his sympathies are sometimes strongly excited in one way, sometimes, in another—now drawn out to a state of painful tension in this direction, now, in that. And every man who understands this species of discipline, knows it to be of the most exhausting character. The sympathies become so many avenues, through which the principle of life is imperceptibly drawn off from the heart. But I did not design to dwell on these minor points. Our work makes demands upon the *spiritual* man far more important than any which relate to his time, intellect or sympathies. Of these I wish briefly to speak.

3. It demands that he cultivate *great expectations*. He must not be faithless, but believing. He must have confidence in God and the power of his truth. When he takes that truth, and goes before the people with it, and urges its authority and claims in the simplicity and fervor of the gospel, he has a right to expect success. It may be immediate, it may be remote. The message may kill, it may make alive. One or the other it will do. A savour of life or of death it will become. It shall not return void. Men's hearts may be hard, but the word of God is a two-edged sword, piercing and dividing asunder even the flinty rock. We may be called to wrestle against principalities and powers, against spiritual wickedness in high places, the most formidable phalanx ever marshalled against the truth, but our weapons are mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds—we may attempt, and expect great things.

4. The demand for *prayer* in this work is also great and urgent. Whatever is done will be done in answer to prayer. The promise is, "According to your faith, be it unto you." Feeble, infrequent, formal prayer will not meet the demand. It must be earnest, fervent, persevering—mighty in faith—abundant in strong crying and tears—the offspring of a deep spiritual agony. The ministry needs to confide, with more childlike simplicity in the divine promises. If they pledge what is impossible with men, we are not to stagger at it, but believe, that with God all things are

possible. He can bring light out of darkness—make the parched ground a pool—give songs in the night—harvests in the desert and turn the shadow of death into eternal day. This needs to be seen and felt in order that the throne may be boldly approached—the horns of the altar seized, and held fast till the heavens open, and pour down righteousness. Such a thing as the salvation of a world is not to be achieved without fervent, effectual prayer, travailings in spirit and groanings unutterable.

5. Again, the work demands great self-denial. Many are to run to and fro in the earth till knowledge is increased. Such will be called to lay themselves upon the altar, sacrifice worldly prospects and ease, forsake country and home, take their life in their hand, go far hence to the Gentiles and amidst burning sands or eternal frosts, toil and suffer and die.

And has the minister *at home*, no self denials to practise? Is his to be a life of indolence and self-pleasing? Not unless the disciple is to be above his master, and the servant above his Lord. Not unless what we have said of the difficulties of his work be sheer delusion. The present aspect of things, especially, is prophetic of anything except ministerial quietude and ease. Multitudes are leagued together to destroy our influence and bring both our office and work into contempt. Multitudes more, professing respect and reverence for the office, have nevertheless many hard and bitter things to say against the *men* who fill it. In addition to this, and more ominous than all the rest, Zion languishes, the spirit is departed, the rain of righteousness is withheld and the enemy is abroad sowing tares with a liberality that never tires nor sleeps. Where the fault lies may not be so easily determined as some men imagine. It may be in the ministry, or in the Church, or, as is more probable, in both. In any event, it behoves us, brethren and fathers, to be vigilant and active. Such a day as this, is no time, to fold our hands and hold our peace. In the language of the prophet, God seems to be saying, "Gird yourselves, and lament, ye priests, howl, ye ministers of the altar—come lie all night in sackcloth, ye ministers of God. Sanctify ye a fast, call a solemn assembly, gather the elders and all the inhabitants of the land into the house of your God, and cry mightily unto the Lord." Whatever be the duty of others much is demanded of us. We need a more self-denying, Christ-honoring spirit—to be crucified to the world and alive unto God—willing to bear reproaches, persecutions, bonds and death even, for the sake of Christ. Therefore,

IV. It is evident that this work demands great and exclusive devotedness to God—in other words, a strong, vigorous piety. This is implied in what has already been said. If this work abounds in such difficulties and trials—calls for such hope, faith, prayer and self-sacrifices, evidently those who engage in it need to

be men of glowing and manly piety. Nothing else can meet the present and future emergencies of the cause. This alone can bear us up amid the labors and perils of the conflict, make us patient under injuries, steadfast in trial, courageous in danger and enduring to the end. Give us this, and we can stay ourselves upon God, be prevalent in prayer, and carry this work through to its completion.

V. If such be the objects, difficulties, promise and demands of our work, the reason why *we cannot come down from it*, is obvious. No other work is so *deserving* our efforts, and so sure of a rich reward. No other work is so arduous and difficult, and so much *needs* our exertions. To every solicitation from the enemy, therefore, we send back promptly Nehemiah's noble reply, *we cannot come down.*

We cannot, as some others have done, *abandon* the work of the ministry altogether for a less difficult and more lucrative employment. Woe is us if we preach not the Gospel—we have been called of God, and solemnly set apart to this work. It is the work of our own, free choice. In a protracted course of preparation for it, we have spent the vigor of our youth, the hard earnings of industrious toil, and in the season of our seclusion, been, comparatively lost to the world. Though poor and feeble our best services, still they are *needed* in this work. We admit, that the burdens and trials it imposes, are in themselves, most painful and difficult to be borne. But we seek not here our rest. Our reward is on high, our crown at the end of the race. Others run for a corruptible, we for an incorruptible crown. Then tell us not of a more lucrative employment. It cannot be found. We shall yet shine as the brightness of the firmament and as the stars forever and ever. Why, then, should we come down?

Neither can we come down to labor with our hands for our own subsistence. Not that we regard it as disreputable, or, in any other respect, beneath us. But because it is not *our work—the* work to which we are called of God and voluntarily pledged. On the contrary, it is the work of *our hearers.* And if we leave our work to go down and do theirs, the unavoidable and disastrous result is, that ours must go undone, and the cause of Christ suffer. Besides, the laborer is worthy of his hire. They which minister about holy things, are to live of the things of the altar. If our hearers are made partakers of our spiritual things, their *duty* is to minister unto us in carnal things. For us, therefore, to leave our appointed work, urgent and pressing as it is, and come down to what God himself has made it the imperious *duty of others to do*, would be wrong, and we cannot do it.

But while we are decided on this point, we cannot, on the other hand, come down to the degrading business of *teaching for hire.* We protest against the principle of making the size of a salary the index to ministerial duty, of throwing ourselves, like mer-

chandise, into the market to be struck off to the highest bidder. To every man who thinks to buy us in this way, we say emphatically "we seek not yours, but you." Your money, in our opinion is the least desirable and the least valuable part of you. We would rather be the instrument, in the hands of God, of saving your soul, than possess all your treasures. And we ask some share in your carnal things only, that we may labor more uninterruptedly and to better advantage for this great object. But we disclaim—as ministers we indignantly repudiate the idea of coming down from our exalted work, to barter for filthy lucre.

Nor can we come down from declaring the *whole truth*, to the exclusive urging of a few selected portions of it. This, at the present day is too often demanded of us. Some of our Churches bear a strong family likeness to an ancient Church of which we have read, and the language of an apostle to that, with some slight variations, would not be inapplicable to them. When they come together every one of them hath a doctrine, hath a revelation, hath an interpretation, especially hath an enterprise, which in their view has peculiar claims to precedence and prominence in the ministrations of the sanctuary, and if we do not think so too, we are pitiably obtuse in our perceptions or shamefully recreant to the truth. Now while our solemn purpose is, not to shun to declare the whole counsel of God—while we mean to inculcate, in the proper place and proportion, all the great doctrines and duties of the gospel and expound the principles of action in all the social, civil and ecclesiastical relations of life—in a word, while we hope, by the grace of God, to keep ourselves pure from the blood of all men, we cannot give ourselves up to the exclusive advocacy of any one truth or cause, however important it may be. This would be coming down from the whole to a part of our duty—and whatever may be thought in some quarters, we cannot doubt that the great cause would suffer loss in the end. That a man who had never been up upon the walls of Jerusalem where he could survey the extended prospect, and get a full and clear view of the vastness and moral grandeur of our enterprise, should differ from us in his judgment on this point, is not so mysterious, but, how a man who understands the design, promise and demands of this work, has had his heart once interested in all its important objects, how such a man—a *christian* man, and above all a christian *minister*, can ask us to leave our moral elevation, and come down to a lower point of observation, and a lower standard of effort, is a question not easily solved. It must be that man, even in his best estate, has strong downward tendencies—that in the moral, as in the natural world, it is easier coming down, than going up. Whatever the explanation, however, let every minister beware how he comes down from his watchtower. No matter who sends for him—nor who proposes an interview. The object usually is to get him down from his work. They

think to do us mischief. Let us have the message ready, we are doing a great work and cannot come down. If they have anything to say—any proposals to make, let them come up to us. We have taken our place on the walls of Zion *for life*, and our next remove is to be up still higher to the Jerusalem above, where we may rest from our labors.

3. In the light of this subject, the claims of that association, by whose appointment I speak, are clearly manifest. All men are liable to fall in the midst of their days, and leave their families to be provided for, by others. None *more* liable, to say the least, than the ministers of Christ. The burdens and trials of their office, many cannot and do not long sustain. They sink beneath them into an early grave. "The fathers, where are they?" Gone, most of them to their account—entered into rest. Zion's strong rods, also, how often are they broken and withered! and their memory hallowed and perpetuated by the works that follow them, and the bereaved families that linger sadly among us! Consult we the nature of our work, then, or the records of the Church —we are impressed with the liability of our brethren to fall midway in their career, and leave their sorrowing wives and children to our kindly sympathy, counsel and aid. I say *aid*, for, if the watchman may not come down from his work, to labor for his own support, he cannot make much provision for the future support of his family. Ordinarily, he must be himself poor, while making many rich. If he have the true spirit of his office, he will patiently submit to it. His Master was poor before him. He had not where to lay his head, and the disciple is not above his Master, nor the servant above his Lord. It is enough for the disciple that he be *as* his Master, and the servant *as* his Lord. On his own account, therefore, he cheerfully consents to endure hardship, live and die poor.

But to think of leaving the objects of his warmest affection, in this cold world, portionless, is no ordinary trial. Were it not that he can point his brethren to them, as Jesus did the beloved disciple to his lonely mother in the hour of *his* dissolution, his agony would be insupportable. Behold, then, brethren, these sisters in the Lord—these former partners of the toils and sorrows of our departed brethren. Once, they were their companions in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ. They helped to bear their burdens, conquer their difficulties, foster their faith and keep them from fainting, while they lived. They stood by them in the last conflict, went with them down to the brink of Jordan, and never left them till they had passed beyond the ministries of mortals, and had angels for their attendants. Let us esteem them very highly in love for their works' sake, and labor to lighten their burdens, cheer their loneliness and cause their hearts to sing for joy. They are commended to your warmest sympathies and prayers.

The nature of our calling, fathers and brethren, is apparent. It

is high, arduous, hopeful. We are pressed with difficulties on one hand, sustained by hopes on the other, and cheered on by the recompense of reward. We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed—perplexed, but not in despair, persecuted, but not forsaken, cast down but not destroyed. Let us stand continually in our watch-tower, in the daytime, and in our ward whole nights, with a vigilant eye upon the enemy, the gospel trumpet in our hand, ready at the first signal of danger, to set it to our mouth, and blow an alarm in God's holy mountain. Our position is a responsible and trying one. But we are not to stand here long—we shall soon be summoned away. A few more days of painful watchings and fastings, and we stand at Christ's judgment seat, our toils and conflicts over, and the results of our ministry to be weighed and adjudged for eternity. O, what shall be the decision of that eventful day concerning us? Having been stedfast to the end, shall it be said to us, "well done, good and faithful servants—enter into the joy of your Lord?" Having turned many to righteousness shall we shine as the brightness of the firmament and as the stars for ever and ever? God grant that this may be our favored lot. Then shall we forget in the glory which shall be revealed in us, the fiery trials through which we are now passing. "Then shall he that now goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, come again with rejoicing bringing his sheaves with him."

SERMON CCCCVI.

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GROWTH IN KNOWLEDGE AND GRACE.

"Grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ."—2 PETER iii c. 18 v.

KNOWLEDGE and grace are progressive. Like nature, society, and intellect, they advance towards ideal perfection found only in God. Nature originated in the incoherent materials of wild chaos, without form and void; and through successive periods undefined advanced to its present state. Society had its infancy and youth, and is now advancing to a state of manhood more perfect. And intellect, though more rapid in its progress, and certain in its attainments, has not reached human perfectibility. All these are in a state of progressive improvement. So will knowledge and grace continue to advance while we know only in part, and cease to be perfect as our Father in heaven.

The all-wise Creator has not raised his rational creatures to an

equal elevation with himself, and placed them on the lofty summit of perfection. Nor may they reach this in their onward progress of knowledge and grace. Though they should become perfect in holiness, and know as they are known; yet being finite they cannot reach perfection infinite. There will ever remain a state of perfection unattained by men. Endless progression, then, may be, and doubtless is the law of their being. Their mental powers and moral susceptibilities will continue to expand with growing knowledge and grace.

Such is the principle recognized and inculcated in the text—"Grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ." This injunction is general in its nature, and unlimited in duration. All who acknowledge Christ to be their Lord and Saviour are to grow in grace and knowledge without any assigned limitation perpetually. Here is a divine recognition of the principle of progressive improvement—ceaseless progression towards ideal perfection. This should wake up the slumbering energies of the soul, and bring into requisition all its powers; as we contemplate the *means*, *nature*, and *evidence* of *growth in knowledge and grace.*

1. The *means* of growth in knowledge and grace. Like those employed in the attainment of other objects, these are various and from different sources. And though they range a wider field than the common means of grace, it is one in which the more enlightened find "green pastures and still waters" that facilitate their progress.

Among these means are those that give an insight to the physical world—its formation, laws, and component parts—embracing natural history, philosophy, and the sciences. Natural history furnishes an outline of the earth, as it came from the forming hand of the Almighty, who said, "Let there be light and there was light—who commanded and it stood fast;" and of its changes and present appearance, as affected by his curse after the fall of man, and the warning elements in volcanoes, earthquakes, tornadoes, and storms. It also furnishes a history of animated nature in its various ranks of being, and different stages of improvement. And while ranging over this field of nature, and studying its history, the mind is expanded and knowledge increased.

Natural philosophy develops the laws of nature, the course of changes in the material world; and the properties of matter, solid bodies, air and light. It also makes us familiar with the laws of motion, the mechanical powers, the angle of vision, the reflection and refraction of rays of light, and the colors of the rainbow. And thus it unfolds the mysteries of nature; till nature's open volume is read in every object around, and God is discovered to be the Sovereign of all. And while we contemplate the scene the soul rises to its just dimensions and in silent wonder, adores the God of nature.

The natural sciences analyze material substances and classify animate nature, till the several parts of each are made familiar. Chemistry reduces bodies to their original elements, making known their component parts, and showing their affinities. Geology informs us how these elementary substances combined in organized bodies to construct this globe for a stage of action. Mineralogy describes the peculiar properties and appropriate uses of the different minerals designed for the benefit of earth's inhabitants. Zoology classifies, and teaches the various habits of animals, which bring the irrational under the controling influence of him, whom God placed over the rest. Ornithology treats of the various species of birds and their peculiarities, as they warble the praises of their Creator. While Astronomy traces the heavenly bodies in their various, yet harmonious courses of concentric circles, first around the sun of their own systems; then the centre of the more extended astral system; and finally the common centre of a universe of worlds and systems. Thus science throws open the avenue of nature and grants the mind free access to all her movements. And as it wanders over this vast field of nature, the soul rises to her etherial destiny, and feels an affinity to the master spirit of the created universe. Nor will she, in the rapture of feeling, and hallowed aspiring, fail to acknowledge him, "God over all." And thus her progress in knowledge and grace is facilitated by physical means that combine all nature in one perfect whole, through which she looks up to nature's God.

Unlike these, *intellectual* means, also promote her growth in knowledge and grace. Disclaiming all acquaintance with the essence of mind and conforming ourselves to its operation merely, intellectual Philosophy becomes a faithful source of improvement. The operations of mind, no less than the properties of matter are objects of rational investigation. And though the science of Metaphysics has been much abused and is generally denounced as a relic of the schoolmen; yet kept within its own appropriate sphere and based on the principles of induction, it is a delightful and important study. Through this medium—mental science—we discover the true sources of knowledge. Nor may they be understood without it—without an acquaintance with metaphysics—that, which carries us beyond the physical world, material objects, and makes us familiar with mind, and mental operations. This only prepares us to understand that we perceive objects through the senses; reflect on what we are conscious of—and believe the testimony of others—from which we discover that the only true sources of knowledge are the senses, consciousness and testimony. A discovery that necessarily develops the intellectual powers of perception, memory, abstraction, imagination, reason and judgment. Powers capable of improvement, and indefinite expansion—that reach away beyond surrounding objects, material substances, and nature's scenery to the loftier contemplation of immaterial and

spiritual objects that are eternal. And amidst these the mind feels its superiority to perishable beings and breathes out a holy aspiration after immortality. Nor will it come down from its aspirings, and be satisfied with the beggarly elements of the world. It must be on the wing, amidst etherial spirits, bearing away to the throne of God. And as it catches a glimpse, in its upward flight, of his transcendent worth, it is in rapture, and urges forward with renewed energy to reach eternal glory. Nor will it tire in its course, or cease its progress in knowledge and grace, while intellect lasts and immortality endures.

Again, *moral* means, differing from physical and intellectual, are not less efficient in their influence on our growth in knowledge and grace. Bearing upon the relations and responsibilities, of accountable beings, they necessarily bring into requisition the moral energies of the soul. And these being susceptible of improvement, we have recourse to the science of moral philosophy, that treats of the moral feelings, will, conscience, and relations of men. And here learning their nature, and the province of each, our responsibilities are seen and acknowledged. Our desires and affections, with a strong attachment to ourselves, assume a moral character, that affords delight or occasions sorrow. Our will also being free in the choice of objects of affection, excite anxiety and needs control. And our conscience, sitting in judgment on these objects, and the desire to obtain them, becomes the moral regulator of the whole machinery of moral action: and, duly enlightened, never fails to decide correctly on the merits of every object of regard and the course pursued to obtain it—which gives its decisions an important influence in every moral movement. And being acquainted with our relations to God and one another, the obligations to both are most plain and binding. And these make us feel the responsibility of acknowledging them in deeds of obedience and acts of good-will. Such an investigation of our moral being, the laws of moral agency, and moral accountability, is a rich source of improvement. It carries us over the whole range of moral existence in ourselves, superior intelligences, and God—unfolds the laws of each and those that bind the whole together in one harmonious moral government. Nor is there ought in the range of physical or intellectual attainments of equal moment. It is our moral relations, responsibilities and actions, that constitute moral character, on which are suspended the destinies of eternity. And each advance in moral science promotes our growth in knowledge and grace, that qualifies us for the more ennobling objects and employments of glorified beings—to range over the whole extent of God's moral kingdom, and associate with angels and the Eternal.

Further, *religious* means, differing from all these, serve to advance our growth in knowledge and grace. They develop the strength of attachment to truth and things divine—particularly Christ and his doctrines. It is the heart or affections with which

religion has to do. Regardless of nature and her works, the mere developments of intellect, and the moral culture of the soul, religion seats itself in the hearts of men. It is holy affections that constitute pure and undefiled religion. And it is this, that attaches us to truth and heavenly objects. And with this attachment we grow in knowledge and grace—search the scriptures to learn the reality and true application of their doctrines. And as we become better acquainted with the being and character of God, our own guilt and unworthiness, the compassionate love and atoning sacrifice of Christ, the nature and necessity of being born of the Spirit, the nature of justification through faith, the perseverance of saints in holy obedience, and the certainty of death, judgment and eternity, our affections are rendered more holy, and our attachment to the truth grows stronger. And thus our knowledge and grace are advanced through religious means. Nor can the higher qualities or purer susceptibilities of the soul be developed without them. However extended our knowledge, we have not attained the utmost of which we are capable, while destitute of holy affections, without religion. It is the love of truth, an attachment to Christ, the religion of the heart, that gives moral dignity to the character, and real worth to men. And without this, we may not be purified, sanctified and glorified. We must be holy, possess hallowed affections, in order to develop all our capabilities, dwell with God, and rise from glory to glory immortal.

II. The *nature* of growth in knowledge and grace. This differs from growth in grace merely; and still more from growth in knowledge without grace—it is the combination of both. Men may grow in grace and remain comparatively ignorant. And they may grow in knowledge and be entirely graceless. Hume and Voltaire possessed much knowledge—they were learned and talented men; but claimed no grace for themselves, and probably possessed none. Bunyan and Howard were pious and benevolent, but made no pretensions to great knowledge and learning, and possessed but comparatively little. While Luther and Calvin were both learned and pious. They grew in knowledge and grace, exhibited the nature of true piety, and exerted the influence of great knowledge.

And all ought thus to advance in both; since the command is positive—"grow in grace, and in the knowledge of the Lord." As this injunction is unqualified, so their growth should be real. But how?—how are they to advance in knowledge and grace? In what does this growth consist? Not in the miraculous interposition of Heaven, nor the addition of new powers, but in the right use of means by those already possessed. The period of miracles has past—God no longer interposes his power to supersede the laws of nature and those of his moral kingdom to make men great and good—they do not thus grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord. Nor does their advance in these consist in the addition

of any new powers of body or mind. The physical and mental energies, moral and religious susceptibilities of men, may be invigorated by growth in knowledge and grace; while it adds none to their numbers, no new powers or faculties. This growth consists rather in the right use of the means designed for this purpose by those powers already possessed. Men are naturally endowed with all the powers essential to progressive improvement. And when applied in the use of appropriate means—found in the works of nature and the volume of divine truth—they grow in knowledge and grace; as their various powers are being harmoniously unfolded by opening scenes and passing events, that continue to expand their views, elevate their aims, sanctify their hearts, and fill their whole souls with delight.

Though the employment of these means fosters, in those destitute of grace, the pride of intellect, and makes them vain-glorious, imagining themselves greater than the rest; yet it renders the pious, who grow in knowledge and grace, more wise, humble, teachable and obedient. The wisdom, that cometh down from above, is greater than the wisdom of this world, and makes men *wise* unto salvation. They may be great and wise in their own estimation, and that of others, even the world; and still be ignorant of themselves, of their capabilities and their destinies. So it was with the ancient philosophers of Greece and Rome; and so it has been, and still is, with the modern infidels of France and Germany. They have claimed, and the world has given them credit for much wisdom; yet they have never understood their own characters and what awaits them in eternity. But when men are taught of the spirit, they become wise indeed. They know more of themselves than the seven wise men of ancient renown, and the whole host of modern free-thinkers. They discover their own littleness, and dependence; while the character of God is exalted, and his claims acknowledged. As they wander over the creation of God, and survey his wondrous works, they are astonished and filled with awe at his greatness—they see him to be "all in all," the "Lord of heaven and earth." And they willingly in reverently bow to him, as their Lord and God; while they discover their own insignificance in the scale of being, and entire, absolute dependence on him. They can neither think nor act without his aid. They cannot make one hair white or black—neither can they make a spire of grass grow; much less raise their puny hand, and stop the planet, sun or system in its course; or stay "old ocean's" waves, hold the whirlwind in their fist, and put to silence the rolling thunder. They are as nothing before God. And thus growth in knowledge and grace lessen men in their own estimation and exalt the Lord, Jehovah—which alone makes them wise unto salvation.

They also become more *humble*. Every attainment in knowledge and grace serves to develop their own worthlessness in

comparison with the superior excellence of their Creator. The deeper they enter into the hidden recesses of their own bosoms, the more dark the deformity of their moral character appears. They see little more than sin and pollution—a cage of unclean things. And but for the abounding grace of God, they might exclaim,

> "Myself is hell: whichever way I turn
> Is hell. And in this hell I see
> A deeper hell beneath!"

But in God they behold all pure and holy—every display of his character is an exhibition of divine excellence. And the contrast between him and themselves renders them most humble. They feel their own inferiority, and delight to honor the Almighty. He is the object of their highest regard—"the chiefest among ten thousand, the one altogether lovely"—nor will they bring their own interest into competition with his honor and glory. They see him to be worthy of their love, praise and adoration; while they feel themselves unworthy of the least of his favors.

Again, this makes them more *teachable*. As men advance in knowledge, they are the more willing to be taught—and as grace abounds they seek the teaching of the spirit. Growing in knowledge and grace prepares them to be taught of God—to learn of the meek and humble Jesus. Though they read nature in every waving spire, blushing flower, towering oak and revolving sphere, they love to sit at his feet, and receive instructions from his word. It is the great foundation of truth and righteousness—the source of light, life and immortality. And with a teachable disposition, they drink deep of the well of salvation—the waters of life. And thus their growth in knowledge and grace renders them more susceptible of divine truth—more docile, willing to be taught.

And further, under the influence of this, they become more *obedient*. As they advance in knowledge and grace, they discover that obedience is the true source of happiness. It is the rational and full employment of all their powers—develops all their capabilities—and affords all the enjoyment of which they are susceptible. Discovering this—that obedience brings out all their resources, and combines the whole in the utmost enjoyment, no authority is necessary to enforce it, they delight to obey, they choose rather to serve the Lord than enjoy sin for a season. Nor will they cease to obey, while they continue to grow in knowledge and grace. And when they shall know, as they are known, and are made perfect in holiness, their obedience shall be complete and their happiness all they are capable of enjoying—their souls shall be full, filled to the utmost with bliss ineffable.

III. The *evidence* of growth in knowledge and grace. This may not always be clear; but should be correctly understood. Its direct application to personal attainments clothe it with importance, that claims the regard of those anticipating the high-

est improvement. Nor should they be destitute of evidence, that will be found in a growing sense of wickedness, a stronger attachment to truth and righteousness, and a habitual desire for higher attainments in holiness.

Such traits of character are never seen in those of intellectual attainments merely. Whatever be their mental acquirements, these do not make them feel more unworthy. Neither do they promote their attachment to divine truth: nor create in them a desire for holiness. These are not the results of human attainments, mere intellectual knowledge. But they are sure marks of growth in knowledge and grace—evidence which the righteous have within themselves. As the light of truth, and the spirit of all grace increase in their souls, they become more and more sensible of their moral deformity. Divine grace, in the heart, is like light in a dark place, it makes surrounding darkness more visible. And as the righteous advance in knowledge and grace, they feel more sensibly their guilt, discover more clearly their unworthiness. *An increasing sense of wickedness, thus*, paradoxical as it may seem—*is good evidence of growth in grace.* David had a growing sense of his wickedness. Paul thought himself the chief of sinners, and Christians generally become more and more sensible of their unworthiness. Nor should any be satisfied without this sure mark of growing piety.

Another evidence, no less essential, will be found in *a stronger attachment to truth and righteousness.* As knowledge increases and grace abounds, the truths of God and the requisitions of his word are better understood, and afford delights that strengthen the attachment of the truly pious. They here discover the true source, the only ground of real happiness, and hold to truth with a firmer grasp; as they grow in grace and the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Nor will this attachment cease to grow stronger, while their views of truth and righteousness are being extended. As they see more clearly their adaptation to the wants of all, and feel more happy in the enjoyment they afford, their love for them will increase—every new development of divine truth under the government of God, and of Christ's righteousness in the salvation of men, will add fresh strength to affections corresponding with their knowledge and grace, and as these advance, so their attachment to truth and righteousness will strengthen; and this attachment will be sure evidence of growth in piety. An evidence that all should possess.

Still another evidence of growth in knowledge and grace will be found in *a habitual desire for higher attainments in holiness.* Destitute of piety, men have no desire to be holy; but possessed of this, they are never satisfied with present attainments. They would be freed from sin and made perfect in holiness; they would be wholly sanctified. This is the desire of their hearts, it is that to which they habitually aspire; nor will they rest, till they reach

perfection. They will go on to know the Lord—grow in knowledge and grace; and each advance will only make them desirous of higher attainments: as they know more of God, they will feel more anxious to be like him, a feeling that will become habitual, and urge them forward in their progress towards perfection. And even when they shall have become perfect in heaven, they will aspire to higher attainments in holiness. Nor will they cease to become more holy, as God continues to make new displays of his character, and they advance in knowledge and grace. And thus they will develop in full glory, the love of their being, endless progression—progressive holiness. In conclusion, I remark,

1. Improvement in knowledge and grace cannot be too highly appreciated. This will seem almost a self-evident proposition to those satisfied with the views of this discourse. If such be our capabilities, and the means of improvement are so various and boundless, then no estimation of its importance can be too great. We are endowed with powers susceptible of in definite improvement, endless progression in knowledge and holiness; and the necessary means are found on either side, around, above, beneath, and within us. There is nothing that we perceive through the senses, on which we reflect in our own bosoms, or of which others bear testimony, that may not be employed in our improvement. And this is plainly enjoined of God and highly beneficial to ourselves.

Who then can place too high an estimate on our improvement, growth in knowledge and grace? Is there aught besides of equal value? Is any other object within the range of our influence, or under our control, to be compared with the improvement of the soul? What are we profited if we gain the whole world and lose our own souls?

2. Each advancing attainment, in knowledge and holiness, increases our capacity for happiness. Though necessarily limited, our capacities for enjoyment are susceptible of indefinite improvement. And though various are the sources of enjoyment, yet happiness is our grand object and aim. We would be happy—reluctant as we are to pursue the path of righteousness and use the appointed means of grace—we still design and expect to obtain happiness. Nor do we desire less that our happiness should be great. Though limited, we delight in the anticipation of its increasing. And though the employment of means to accomplish an object so desirable be unwelcome, yet we rejoice in the prospect of its being attained. It is the great desire of our hearts to be increasingly happy.

3. Our wants and abilities correspond exactly with the requisitions and blessings of Heaven. God requires only what we are able to perform, and he furnishes the means just suited to our wants. We are required to grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord; and all nature, with the intellectual and moral worlds, and the

kingdom of grace, are thrown open to our assistance. We need nothing more to perform what is enjoined, and are capable of bringing all these to aid in the work. We may wander over the animal, the vegetable and mineral kingdoms of nature, through the active and passive powers of intellect, amidst the acts of volition, decisions of conscience and relations of God and men, and into the secret chambers of the heart, amidst the affections and more delicate susceptibilities of the soul, with the word of God in our hands and the Holy Spirit in our bosoms, and grow in knowledge and grace through all our course. Nor is there aught unwelcome or difficult in this—we have all the requisite powers to perform it with delight. And in doing this, we expand the soul, advance in happiness, and secure the promised blessings of life eternal.

Happy result of a wise adaptation of means to the end! What a correspondence of wants and abilities to requisitions and blessings! It is worthy of infinite wisdom; and will afford delight to blessed intelligences through interminable ages. Angels may well desire to look into the manifold wisdom of God, and with admiring wonder chaunt his praises. While redeemed spirits, still growing in knowledge and grace, and rising higher towards perfection infinite, shall add a symphony to the song of heaven, before unknown; and as the echo is heard through the mansions of that blessed abode, in the sweet accents of love and loud hallelujahs to the Lamb; all heaven shall join in the full chorus of "Blessing, honor and glory" to God, who adapted the means to their salvation and crowned them with a blessed immortality.

4. The perfect holiness of heaven will be a source of delight ineffable. There the affections, moral powers, intellect and every body will be holy. Mortality will have put on immortality, and nothing unholy will enter there.

There every obstacle to progressive improvement will be removed, and our attainments in knowledge and holiness be more rapid. With associates from every part, and each period of this world, its history will soon be known. With those from other worlds, (if inhabitants they have), we become acquainted with their peculiarities, and the mode of their being saved and raised to heaven; till the history of all worlds be understood, and we become as citizens of the universe. And associated with the different orders of angels, we learn the character of each, till the office and employment of the whole are familiar; and then witnessing the unfolding events of God's moral government, over this vast and numberless throng of rational intelligence, and the new displays of his character continually transpiring, yet incomprehensible, our souls, ever expanding, rapt in wonder and admiration, will swell with delight ineffable.

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BURDENS TO BE CAST UPON THE LORD.

"Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and he shall sustain thee: he shall never suffer the righteous to be moved."—PSALM lv. 22.

SCARCELY do we find in the Bible, stronger expressions of anxiety and distress, than in the Psalm from which the text is taken. "My heart," says the Psalmist, "is sore pained within me, and the terrors of death are fallen upon me. Fearfulness and trembling are come upon me, and horror hath overwhelmed me." This distress was caused by the hypocrisy and treachery of others; especially of those who were professors of religion, and who had a high standing in the church. "For it was not," says he, "an enemy that reproached me; then I could have borne it; neither was it he that hated me that did magnify himself against me; then I would have hid myself from him; but it was thou, a man mine equal, my guide, and mine acquaintance. We took sweet counsel together, and walked unto the house of God in company." Sometimes he speaks of the cause of his trouble as if there were several, as when he says, "They cast iniquity upon me, and in wrath they hate me," and sometimes as if there were but one; but he was evidently surrounded by artful, malignant, and hypocritical persons, who, while they professed great regard for his welfare, would not suffer him to pursue his duties quietly, or to be at peace. "He hath," says he, "put forth his hands against such as be at peace with him: he hath broken his covenant. The words of his mouth were smoother than butter, but war was in his heart: his words were softer than oil, yet were they drawn swords." These persons were doubtless types of a class who have been in the church in every age. Sometimes they have remained concealed, then again they have been drawn out, and become conspicuous; but they have always been among the severest trials of the people of God, and the greatest hindrances to his cause.

Thus troubled, two sources of relief occurred to the Psalmist. His first impulse was to free himself from the annoyances occa-

sioned by the wickedness of others and the responsibilities that were laid upon him, by fleeing away and remaining in solitude. "Oh," said he, "that I had wings like a dove; for then would I fly away and be at rest. Lo, then would I wander far off, and remain in the wilderness." We here see in him those germs of the monastic system which belong to our nature, and which, in after ages, were so fully and so disastrously developed. But better counsels prevailed. Instead of casting off his responsibilities and fleeing from his troubles, he was led to see that there was a God on high who was able to sustain him under the one, and to deliver him from the other, and to go to him in earnest and confiding prayer. "As for me," says he, "I will call upon God: and the Lord shall save me." Having thus found the true source of relief and strength, he invites others to share it with him in the words of the text—"Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and he shall sustain thee: he shall never suffer the righteous to be moved."

It will be observed that the former part of this passage is limited by the latter. The doctrine, therefore, which it contains, and which I propose to illustrate in its application, first to individuals, and then to this society, is, that the *righteous*, who cast their burden upon the Lord, shall be sustained.

These words, as far as they imply the existence of a burden of some kind, are applicable to the whole human race. There are none who do not find that in their condition, or character, or prospects, or duties, which gives them anxiety, and which may be regarded as a burden.

But the burdens which are borne by men are of two kinds. There are some, such as physical suffering, and oftentimes poverty, which are laid upon us by the providence of God, which we do not at all voluntarily assume, and to free ourselves from which it is right that we should make the most strenuous efforts. These come upon us as passive subjects of that course of events which is ordered by God, and when we cannot free ourselves from them, our duty is, not mere submission—but cheerful acquiescence, and a full exercise of those passive virtues which are among the most efficient means of moral discipline. We are bound to believe, we do believe, however unequally these burdens may be distributed however mysterious it may seem that they should exist at all, that they are all apportioned and laid upon us by the hand of a father and though we may say at the time, with Jacob, that all these things are against us, yet, if we have a filial spirit, we shall find in the end that God meant them for good. The basis of our submission is our confidence in him that his government is perfect, and while we know that "he does not afflict willingly nor grieve the children of men," it is ours to feel and to say, "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him."

But there is another class of burdens which belong to us as ac-

tive and responsible beings, which are not so much laid *upon* us as *before* us, and which it is optional with us to assume or not. These are those great duties of piety towards God, and of reciprocity and benevolence towards men, the burden of which has been fully taken up, and perfectly sustained, but once in the history of our world. God is carrying forward his purposes, in the accomplishment of which we believe he is working out the highest good of his universe. In doing this he makes use of the voluntary agency of his intelligent and accountable creatures. He has made them capable of recognizing and appreciating those ends which he proposes, and of becoming intelligently co-workers with him. Here it is that we find the true dignity of man, and the highest point of union between him and God; for as man is great in intellect only as he comprehends the thoughts of God, and great in suffering only as he submits to the will of God, so is he great in action only as he labors to accomplish the purposes of God. But the present constitution of things is such, that in doing that part which God has assigned to us, which is truly ours, in the accomplishment of these purposes, self-denial and suffering are often involved.

So far as we can judge, if sin had never entered, no duty would have been regarded as a self-denial or a burden. Obedience to a perfect law would have been perfect liberty, and the result of this union of liberty and law would have been a happiness limited only by the capacity of its subject. But sin entering, necessarily became the cause of burden bearing, both to those who were under its power, and to those who were not. In itself, and to those who are under it, it is the greatest possible burden. There is no slavery like that of sin, and that too, whether its subjects do or do not struggle against it. So far as holy beings have intercourse with those that are sinful, as when the arch angel contended with the devil, it must be a grief and a burden; and then, if any are to be recovered from the power of sin, as it has in itself no recuperative energy, whatever is done for them must originate in an influence from without; and the great law of the universe for their recovery, seems to be that of vicarious suffering. Of this, we have the great example in our Lord Jesus Christ. He, and he only, "made his soul an offering for sin." He alone "bore our sins in his own body on the tree." His sufferings only constitute an atonement, and lie at the foundation of human hope. Still, it was necessary that the Apostles, and those who came afterwards, should be "partakers of Christ's sufferings," and "should fill up that which was behind of the afflictions of Christ." He laid the foundation, but the superstructure is to be carried up, and this can be done only by the same spirit of self-renunciation and of burden bearing which actuated him.

Enlightened benevolence is essentially and uncompromisingly opposed to all wickedness, and the more intense the benevolence,

the stronger is this feeling. Let then a benevolence, so enlightened that it is opposed to nothing but sin, so free that it is willing to do all things but to commit sin, move forward to the accomplishment of its purposes in a world like this, and a point will be reached, even though every thing be done with the meakness and gentleness of Christ, where there will be conflict, where all the possible power and art of selfishness and malignity will be arrayed against it, and where, if it goes forward at all, it must be into the fires which the rage and malice of its enemies have kindled. Let it be now, that the cause of God requires it, and it will go into those fires. So was it with Christ. He excited no unnecessary opposition. There was nothing in his manner that justly gave offence, but by simply taking up the burden which his mission required, he came under a pressure of agony which rendered necessary every drop of the bloody sweat, he came to a point where he must wear the purple robe and the crown of thorns, and where he might not hide his face from shame and spitting. He came to a point where the cross was laid upon him so long as he could bear it, where the nails were driven, and where the accursed tree as it was raised up and fell with a shock to its position, caused every fibre in his frame to vibrate in agony. There, suspended between heaven and earth, lifted up that he might draw all men unto him, he hung for six long hours, enduring those agonies of expiring nature that could not have been greater, and that might not be less. The burden that was upon him bore him down to death; and at no point could he have withdrawn from it, so as to spare himself a single pang. So was it with the Apostles. They were willing to become all things to all men, so far as they might. But not so could the crest of the serpent be smoothed down, and his envenomed bite be prevented. It was necessary that they should hunger and thirst, and be naked and buffeted, and have no certain dwelling place, and be reviled, and persecuted, and defamed, and made as the filth of the world and the off-scouring of all things; and finally that they should lay down their lives as the highest example they could furnish of the grandeur of faith, and as their strongest possible attestation to the value of those purposes of God which they were laboring to carry out. So was it with those ancient veterans in virtue mentioned by the Apostle in the 11th chapter of Hebrews; and so has it been with the martyrs and faithful servants and missionaries of Christ down to the present time. These have all recognized the great principle that burdens were to be assumed and borne if good was to be done, and in bearing them they have all been actuated by one spirit.

This principle we must recognize, this spirit we should consider well. It was not, properly speaking, an anti-spirit. It was a positive principle striving after a great and glorious object, and going forward to the attainment of that in a spirit of love, quietly but

resolutely bearing every burden which the accomplishment of its purpose necessarily involved. It was not a vain or ostentatious spirit, for it sacrificed reputation among men; it was not an enthusiastic spirit, for the object in view justified the highest feeling and effort; it was not a fanatical spirit, for there was no malignity; it was not a superstitious spirit, for they followed Christ, and paid little regard to orgnizations and external forms; it was not a selfish and ambitious, or a self-willed and factious spirit, for they had no personal object to accomplish, or personal feeling to gratify. If they could but preach Christ and him crucified, and exalt him as a Saviour from sin, it was enough. It was by prayer and effort and suffering that the cause of Christ was borne forward, and souls converted in the early days of the church. Paul knew what it was to "travail in birth" for souls, to be in constant heaviness for them, to agonize for them in prayer, and wherever, since that time, souls have been converted, wherever there have been revivals of religion, there have been those who have known what these things mean. These have been few, and perhaps unknown, but they have been God's burden-bearers in the great work of building his spiritual temple, and it is because these have been so few that that work has gone so slowly up.

Our business, then, as individuals, is to follow Christ and his Apostles, both in the recognition of this principle and in the spirit in which we bear those burdens which properly devolve upon us; and thus doing, we shall be sustained.

But while we ask, as individuals, the simple question, Lord, what would'st thou have us to do? and would be ready to do and to suffer all that might be required by its true answer, we are to remember that we are liable to assume burdens that do not properly belong to us, and to bring upon ourselves troubles which we may properly, and which we ought to avoid. The words of the text are—"Cast *thy* burden upon the Lord, and he shall sustain thee." At this point cases often arise which it is difficult to decide. No doubt it may happen, that a man, passing by, and observing men at strife, could interfere with advantage; and yet we are told that he that passeth by and meddleth with strife belonging not to him, is like one that taketh a dog by the ears. It is a great thing to pass through life wisely, knowing our own duty, and doing it; and not interfering with those things which do not belong to us. The character of men may often be tested as much by what they let alone, as by what they do. It cannot be doubted that a large portion of the burdens which men take upon them, of the cares and anxieties which trouble them, are such as they have no right to have. and as are in no proper sense theirs. It is not the ambitious, the covetous, the fashionable and worldly, pressed down as they often are with their burdens, that are invited to cast those burdens upon the Lord. No; God will sustain

no man, in the sense in which that term is here used, under such burdens as these. As I have already said, the last part of the text limits the first. It is the righteous only who are here invited to cast their burdens upon the Lord, and only as they are righteous, that they have any right to expect to be sustained.

But there is nothing so difficult to reach and to maintain as the simple and unostentatious, and yet energetic benevolence of Christ and his first followers, there is a constant danger, even to the righteous, and those most directly engaged in his service, of turning into some by-path which seems to lead in the same direction, of putting that which is subordinate before that which is primary, of making false issues, and turning aside to vain jangling, and thus becoming involved in perplexities and cares which never could have come upon them if they had pursued the simple line of duty. O, how many of the cares connected with rites and ceremonies, and with the maintenance of sectarianism in its various forms, are of this character! How do these cares often dwarf the growth, and deform the proportions of religion itself! And can the burden of these be brought to God with the expectation that he will sustain us under them? No. They are to be repented of, and cast off altogether, and never resumed. The only duty we have respecting such cares and burdens is, not to have them at all. They are all sinful in themselves, and they are injurious as exhausting that energy which ought to be given to the support of those burdens which are truly ours. It is these burdens, and these only which we have a right to cast upon the Lord—not to free ourselves from responsibility—for the language is, "Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and he shall sustain"—What? The burden? No; but "*thee*." The promise is that God will sustain us under our burdens, however heavy they may be, if they are the burdens of the righteous, that is, if they are such, not as we have wickedly and wantonly taken upon ourselves, but such as he has appointed for us, and as are assumed out of a regard to his cause.

But perhaps some one may ask at this point, how God can be said to sustain those who are overborne by wickedness, and who finally die in consequence of their burdens, and under their very pressure. How little does such an one know of the range of the spirit, and the power of faith, and the preciousness of the promises, and the consolations of God! I would answer such an one as Christ would have answered one who should have asked him to reconcile what he said about his yoke as easy, and his burden as light, with what he said to the same disciples of their being hated of all men, and persecuted and killed for his name's sake. I answer in the words of one who reckoned that the sufferings of the present time were not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us; who, while he looked at the things which are not seen, could count every affliction which was but for a mo-

ment, light, because it was working out for him a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; who could say of the Christians in his day, "that though they were killed all the day long, and were counted as sheep for the slaughter, yet that in all these things they were more than conquerors through him that had loved them.

Thus we see precisely the position which every true servant of God must wish, as an individual, to take. He must wish to have the spirit of Christ, to put himself under the great law of love, and then to do and to suffer just all that that law would require. He would wish to accomplish the greatest amount of good within his power, and whatever sacrifices or sufferings he might make or endure as necessary to this, he would say in unpresumptuous imitation of Him whose follower he is, "The cup that my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?"

And what is thus true of an individual Christian, must also be true of a body of Christians associated for the purpose of promoting any one of those objects which they believe it to be the purpose of God to accomplish. This is the position which this Board of Missions, and every true friend of this blessed cause must wish to take. For a long time the church neglected to take up this burden. Awakened by the call of Mills and his associates, our predecessors were aroused to a sense of their responsibility. They put their shoulders under this burden. We think they were called upon by God to do it. We do not think that any of them, no, not even the most devoted missionary, has followed too closely in the footsteps of the Saviour, or borne a burden that was too heavy. If Mills, or Hall, or Evarts, could speak to us to-night, we do not think that one of them would regret that he had labored or suffered so much. But they have gone, and have transferred the burden to us, and now, as we are true to our trust, our wish is to do and to suffer just all that God would have us do and suffer, that the gospel of his Son may become "a light to lighten the Gentiles, and a salvation to the ends of the earth."

The question then arises, what the precise burden is which God would lay upon us as a Missionary Society?

The importance of this question, and the reason why it presses upon us particularly at this stage of our operations, may be seen if we compare the present moment with that which took place in the early period of Christianity.

When this movement commenced, it evidently had something of the spirit which actuated the disciples of primitive times. The burden which was felt arose, not chiefly from a view of the temporal misery and degradation of the heathen, but from their wickedness, and their consequent exposure to eternal death. It was the interests of the soul in its relations to death, and judgment, and eternity, that burdened the spirit, and gave energy to effort,

and weight to appeals, and which led men to feel that they must, at all hazards, preach "Jesus and salvation" to dying men. It was felt that there was a moral pestilence raging in those regions, which was going on unchecked to its awful issues, and the cry of its victims was ringing in their ears that they should bear to them the balm of Gilead, and make known the physician that is there. So was it with the primitive Christians. The love of Christ constrained them. Their desire and prayer to God for men was that they might be saved. They were willing—thus illustrating the true and only harmony between a stern regard to principle and a wise regard to expediency—to become all things to all men, that they might *save* some. It was because the Gospel of Christ was the power of God unto *salvation*, that they were not ashamed of it. They felt that they were sent unto the Gentiles, "to open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they might receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in Christ." It was true indeed that their doctrine would revolutionize and radically transform society; but as they looked with the eye of faith upon the interests of eternity, the relations and interests of time dwindled into insignificance, and with fearlessness, with simplicity, and with great power, gave they witness to the central and incontrovertible fact of the resurrection of Christ, and to the freeness and preciousness of the salvation that is in him, and left the event with God. Pursuing this course, Christianity was aggressive, and triumphant; and continued to be so till the simplicity and grandeur of their object was lost in those questions which gave rise to sects, and which spring out of the relations of Christianity to the interests of man in the present life. Then the deep waters which had begun to flow, instead of rolling on to fertilize the whole earth, were drained off into the marshes of controversy, and became stagnant; and a region which ought to have been like the garden of God, became the fitting haunt of those apocalyptic frogs which came out of the mouth of the dragon, and of the beast, and of the false prophet. And what thus took place in that wider and mightier movement, it is to be feared may recur in this of our day. As this cause makes progress, it is found to bear upon literature, and science, and civilization, and commerce; and to become complicated, as few would suppose, with questions of church government, and of politics, and of social organization; and there is danger that a desire to promote civilization, and literature, and science, and to remove directly specific forms of evil, moral, social, and political, will take the place of the simple desire to preach Christ and him crucified, and to save men.

The question then recurs. What are the burdens which God would lay upon us?

I have already remarked that when we, as Christians, undertake

to promote an end, we do it because we suppose God intends to accomplish that end, and thus become co-workers with him. The responsibility and burden, therefore, which we assume must be determined by that purpose of God which we propose to accomplish—that particular result and triumph of his truth which we hope to accelerate, or to augment. But if, guided by revelation, we transport ourselves forward, and take a position where we can look back on the great drama of time as completed, we shall see that the grand results which God has been working out are two; one of which, however, was subservient to the other. The first of these is to have its theatre on the earth, and will involve the full and perfect triumph of Christianity over every thing that opposes itself to it. The stone that was cut out without hands, must become a great mountain, and fill the whole earth. "The earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord as the waters cover the sea." Sooner or later, in one way or another, the time must come when the evils which now provoke the vengeance of heaven, and curse humanity, shall come to an end; when wars, and intemperance, and licentiousness, and fraud, and slavery, and all oppression shall cease; when men shall show a true love to themselves by obedience to all the natural laws of God, and a true love to each other and to God by an obedience to all his moral laws; when all the energies of society, instead of being wasted in indolence, or dissipated and palsied by vice, or misdirected by ambition, shall be called out under the direction of a science that can avail itself of the agencies of nature in a way that we now know nothing of, and shall be employed in beautifying the earth, and in adding to the comforts of man; when family jars, and sectarian zeal, and party spirit shall cease, and, through the transforming influence of Christianity, there shall be a condition of society as perfect as we can conceive of in the present state; when the kingdom of God shall be set up, and his will shall be done on the earth. It is from partial glimpses of this state, and an attempt to remove particular evils which are supposed to be the chief obstacle in the way of its advent, without any perception of the deep-seated and radical difficulty in the very nature of man, which nothing but the religion of Christ can remove—the plague spot that his blood alone can cleanse—that there are so many reformers of the world, crying, Lo here! and Lo there! whom we are not to go after nor to follow.

But if it is specifically for *this* state that we are to labor, then we can make no difference between what is, and what is not, missionary ground. There is no city, or village, or family, on the face of the earth where this state is commenced; and when we look at nominal christendom and see how utterly alien from the spirit of Christ are its general maxims and its current of feeling, how its energies and resources flow in channels that were never marked

out by the finger of God, and that the little portion of those energies and resources that is devoted to him and his service is but as the light mist which ascends from the surface of the river, to the great body of its waters; when we see its religious divisions and animosities, and these, too, growing more broad and inveterate, and its deep-seated moral corruptions; when we see how much there is of faithful preaching of the gospel, and how general and systematic is its rejection; we feel that there is on every side of us a call for Christian labor, and that unless there shall be brought about another proportion altogether of the aggressive and the resisting forces, the new order of things can never come. To labor for the accomplishment of this object in his family and neighborhood, is the business of every individual Christian; it is the business of every church to labor for it in its vicinity; and in doing this there is no vice or form of evil which they must not approach and attempt to remove; not a weed great or small is to be left standing in the garden of God. But this is not missionary labor; it is but as the farming and gardening of our thickly settled states, while the axe of the missionary startles the ear of silence in the unbroken forest.

But there is another result which God has in view, to which this of which I have now spoken is but as the widening of the river at its mouth, to the ocean into which it flows. This is that which lies beyond the general judgment. This, "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive it." Every thing relating to this is vast beyond our thought. Those simple words, "Eternal life;" those words of our Saviour, "Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father;" the capacities of the soul, and the endless duration upon which it enters; the joy of angels on the conversion of one sinner; the coming, and sufferings, and death of the Son of God, all show that this result, even in the case of a single soul, far transcends our conceptions. It is salvation! "Salvation which is in Christ Jesus, with eternal glory"—Salvation through the blood of the Lamb! And then, when we look at the numbers without number of the redeemed, every one of them circling nearer and nearer the eternal throne, till he is lost in a brightness which our present vision cannot penetrate, and at the wonderful revelation of the glory of God, of his mingled justice and mercy which is made, and shall be for ever in every one of these, we see a result worthy of this strange scene of six thousand years, of its central figure, the cross of Christ, and of its closing scenes, the final conflagration, and the general judgment.

Now every soul that becomes a partaker of this salvation, though he may have contributed nothing to the perfection of society on earth, though like the dying thief, it may have been in the hour of his last agony that he turned an eye of faith on a crucified Redeemer, will yet swell the glory of that result.

It was this salvation that he whom, without irreverence, we may call the first great missionary, came from heaven to provide, and to publish; it is the fact that there is such a salvation, that lies at the root of missions, and supplies the circulating sap of all their vitality. This salvation it is our business, as a missionary society, to make known to the ends of the earth, to preach it to every creature, to proclaim it in every place, till the message shall find such a lodgment as to give us assurance that it will continue to be proclaimed there, and then having, like the great Apostle, no more place in those parts, to pass on to places where Christ has not been named. Certainly there ought to be an agency for proclaiming these glad tidings everywhere, simply as tidings, to all classes of men, however wicked and debased, and giving them an opportunity to embrace this salvation, without waiting to perfect society, or to adjust the nicer questions of theological controversy. Certainly, for the sake of the church itself there should be enterprises like this in which Christians, who may still differ in many things, may unite as brethren their prayers and efforts, and which may be as cope-stones along the arch of the spiritual temple, where the tracery that springs from different points and adorns its sides, may intertwine its branches, and give unity and symmetry to the whole. This gives us the distinction between missionary labor and all other; this gives us our principle, however difficult, in particular cases, its application may be.

Our object thus being the salvation of men, the burden which rests upon us, is not simply a proclamation of the gospel among the heathen, but *such a proclamation of it as shall save the soul.* If we fail of this, we fail of our object altogether. I do not say that we do no good, but we fail of the object we have in view, of that which is the very soul of our enterprise. We are not a society for promoting civilization, or literature, or the arts, but for saving men; and the great reason why this is not more fully accomplished, is because our missionaries and our Board, and the Christian public who act with us are not more ready to take up just the burden that is necessary to accomplish this. This is not the giving of money. Money cannot convert a soul. Any amount of this may be given, and nothing be effected, except that a certain sum has changed hands. Money! why, the heathen give far more money for the support of the pomps and follies of their religions than we do for the spread of ours. It is not the establishment of seminaries, or of printing presses, or of any external apparatus. No; but it is that constraining love of Christ, and that sense of the infinite value of salvation, which leads the missionary to *preach the word* in season and out of season, to testify publicly and from house to house, of the grace of God; which would lead our missionary Boards and the Christian public to sympathize with their missionaries in these feelings, and to sustain them constantly in the

arms of faith and of prayer; which would fill the monthly concerts all over the land, and cause those who were there to wrestle with God as did Jacob, and to say to him, "we will not let thee go except thou bless us." It is one thing to give money, and print reports, and go across the ocean and establish a station, and print books, and tell them something of the Christian religion, and how it differs from theirs; and quite another to go to them as Brainard did to his poor Indians, as those who are under the wrath of God, who must accept of his mercy in Christ or perish; and by the very agony of prayer, and the earnestness of preaching connected with it, to be the means of such outpourings of the Holy Spirit, and of such manifest and surprising conversions to God. Those Indians have probably had no agency in perfecting society upon earth, their very tribes have perished, but they now shine as stars in the crown of their Redeemer; and those conversions were worth more than all the results of great meetings, and speeches, and munificent donations from which the spirit of prayer and of God are absent, and which are not connected with the salvation of the soul—there was connected with them more true missionary labor.

That we have failed, and that this has been our great failure, of taking up this burden as we ought, there can be no doubt. Whether wrong principles have in any case been adopted in pursuing things incidental too much, I cannot say, but they certainly have been pursued too exclusively. There has been a withdrawing of the spirit from those higher regions of spiritual sympathy, and struggle, and communion with Christ in the fellowship of his sufferings; and all the channels of that sympathy have been left empty and dry; and so while there has been external activity, and some good has been done, there has yet, around many of the missionary stations, not been the greenness and verdure which we hoped to see. So has it been; so is it now. And unless this Board and its friends come together with the confession of their sin in this, and with a readiness to assume this burden more fully for the future, and to cast themselves upon the Lord that they may be sustained in bearing it, then that which is really the cause of missions will go backwards, and we shall have perplexities and burdens come upon us as judgments, and under which God will not sustain us.

But, it may be asked, are we to neglect literature and science, education, and forms of government, and civilization? Are not these valuable in themselves, and are they not important aids in promoting Christianity? Are we to narrow our views to a single object, and not rather take those that are comprehensive and enlarged?

The general question here involved, there is not now time fully to discuss. From the first there have been two theories of mis-

sions, according to one of which we are to introduce Christianity at once, as a means of salvation, and to leave other things to follow in its train; and according to the other, we are to introduce other things as the means of introducing Christianity. I do not mean that missions have been established distinctly and avowedly on these two principles, but that in the minds and in the labors of some, the spirit of the first method, which may be called the method of faith, and that in the minds and the labors of others, the spirit of the second method, which may be called the method of philosophy, has predominated. Now we believe in the method of faith. We believe that the greater will include the less—that as a general thing under God's government, and more especially where, as in a tree, or an animal, or in a human being, or in the social state, our object is to be reached by a process of development, the attainment of the highest end must necessarily involve that of all others. We believe that the religious nature of man is that which is deepest and most radical in him, and that it is only as that is quickened, that motives of sufficient power to induce him to break away from the vices and degradations which are opposed to a high civilization as well as to a true religion, can be brought to bear upon him. We believe, that except as this nature is quickened and directed and strengthened by Christianity, any form of civilization that may exist will fall in by its own weight; that literature will become corrupted and a curse; that social life will be full of jarring elements; and that inventions in the arts, and those improvements which facilitate the intercourse of men, and every thing which gives an accelerated movement to society will be but as the laying down of the iron track, and the concentration of energy in the iron horse, that shall prepare the way for the shocks of more awful and destructive collisions. We do not find, and the fact is to be noted, that Christ or his Apostles made any inventions or discoveries in the arts and sciences, or sought directly to promote literature. We believe that the preaching of "Christ and him crucified," and that only, is "the wisdom of God and the power of God unto salvation;" and that if we can so plant and water the tree of life that we shall have the fruit that is unto life eternal, we shall have also the green leaves, and the fragrance, and the broad shade of a right social state; and we think but lightly of that kind of enlargement and liberality of view which would lead any one to leave his appropriate work at the root of this tree; and to be looking all over the branches, and spending his minute and fruitless labors around its individual fruit stalks, and the peduncles of its leaves. The principle here indicated we hold to be essential in the first planting of Christianity, and even after it is established, it may be doubted whether it will not be found that those who attempt to carry society forward on any other principle, will not labor in the very fire, and weary themselves for very vanity."

We see, then, distinctly what our object is; and what the great burden is which we must assume if we would accomplish it. It is one which the world knows nothing of; which none but those who sympathize with Christ in that spirit which brought him to this world can know. But as we move on under this, we find at different points, individual burdens which often press upon us with great weight. Such have, at times, been the want of suitable men as missionaries; the removal by death of able and distinguished helpers; the interference of popery; persecutions among the heathen, and perhaps defections among those who, it was hoped, would stand firm; a want of pecuniary means, and revulsions in the commercial world. Of this class of burdens, which must vary at different times, I shall at present speak of only two.

The first is, the state of the churches at home—the alarming suspension of divine influences over the land, and the consequent evils that are every where creeping in. The Apostle well understood his subject when he compared a Christian community to an organized body, in which, if one member suffer, all the members suffer with it. Water cannot rise higher than its source. If Christianity is to go out from us, we can send only such as we have. If our churches are in a backslidden, and languid, and worldly state, and have little care for the conversion of men around them, they will have still less for that of the heathen. Prayer will cease, the contributions will fall away, missionaries of the right stamp cannot be had, unexpected obstacles will arise, the hands of those in the field will be weakened, the strength of the bearers of burdens will be decayed, and there will be much rubbish so that they will not be able to build the wall. We are indeed assembled to deliberate for the salvation of the heathen, but when we see the woe of Bethsaida so dreadfully incurred by our own congregations, and that gospel which we would send far away apparently so powerless as it is preached at home; when we see our young men growing up, and those who are educated going into the world without religion; and when we look at the immediate and more remote bearings of all this upon the cause of missions, we must feel that this state of things is pressing as a heavy burden upon us. O, that this great and solemn convocation might so feel this burden, and so cast it upon the Lord, that a spirit may go forth from this place that shall revive the waste places of Zion, and cause the wilderness and solitary place to rejoice.

The second burden of this kind which I shall mention, is one which probably would not exist with much severity of pressure, were it not for the first. It is, that the friends of missions are not altogether agreed among themselves respecting the true burdens, which, as associated together in this enterprise, they ought to assume. There is doubtless an honest difference of opinion among good men, true friends of this cause, and of the Redeemer's king-

dom, more particularly on the subject of slavery, how far we ought to go, and what precise course we ought to adopt. This subject I mention here, not for the purpose of discussing it, for this is not the place, but because it is a great and difficult subject, and many and perhaps all the friends of this cause have come together feeling that it must press as a peculiar burden upon this meeting of the Board. God forbid that this Board should not assume fully every burden on this subject which the God of missions would lay upon them. I hope, and believe, it is their desire to do so. God forbid that they should do any thing to countenance or to sustain the curse of slavery, or that in their own onward movement they should create backwater that would retard the vessel freighted with any other benevolent enterprise. But then, on the other hand, there are evils equally obvious, and perhaps equally great, which must ensue if this Body should turn aside from its appropriate work, if elements should enter permanently into its discussions and counsels which must, in a body constituted like this, become the elements of distraction, and of disaster to the heathen world, but which might be appropriately and successfully controlled by organizations formed for the purpose, and be combined to issues that should be for the glory of God, and the good of the slave.

And while there are these dangers on the one hand and on the other, such as nothing but the wisdom and grace of God can enable us to avoid, the heart bleeds at the thought that in a day like this, Christian brethren cannot agree to labor together in sending the gospel of peace and love to the heathen. That in this day when divisions are extending so widely; when the dragon of popery is pursuing the church wherever she goes into the wilderness of heathenism, and stands ready to devour every child of her missions that may be born; when the malaria that comes up from his seat is borne on every breeze across the ocean, and is beginning here and there to render thick and stifling the free air to which we were born; when the missionaries are struggling and dying in the field for want of help; when the whole heathen world is open to us, and from its length and its breadth the Macedonian cry comes up; when it does seem as if, if we all would but unitedly put our shoulders under this ark of God—for under this dispensation he has made us all priests unto him—and bear it forward, the Jordan of our difficulties would open before us, and we might go in and possess the promised land—that in such a day, there should be danger that that union which is strength should be dissolved, that on any ground, those who have labored, and have loved to labor together in this good cause, should fall out by the way and bring reproach on the cause of Christ in the sight of the heathen, and of those who watch for our halting, is a thought that cannot fail to be as a heavy burden upon every heart that

loves the cause of God. May that God who has hitherto interposed in behalf of this cause, prevent it.

But whatever the burdens now resting upon us may be, I may remark here, that probably they will not, as a whole, be less in time to come. There are some who suppose that we are on the borders of the millennium, and that obstacles are to give way of themselves—that as the church begins to move upon the old strong holds and fortresses of sin, she will find them dismantled, and the gates wide open, and those who had hitherto defended them, waiting with open arms to receive her. But that law under which the love that would reclaim men and bring them back to God was of old espoused to struggle and suffering, has not been repealed, and is not likely to be in our day. The great adversary of God and man is not asleep; and we may be sure, if some fortresses seem to be weakened or abandoned, and some batteries to be quiet, that it is because there are masked batteries preparing, and mines dug, and trains laid, it may be under our very feet. He must have read history and man to little purpose, and know little of the deep-seated opposition of this world to the cross of Christ, and his simple and spiritual religion, who sees any thing in the improvements or enlightenment, or in what is called the liberality of the 19th century, which is to prevent the fires of persecution, and the agonies and triumphs of martyrdom. He must have looked upon passing events with but a listless eye, who has not seen indications that such things are on their way. Some of these are to be found in the tendency to unchecked democracy, and the spirit of mobs; in the prevalence of infidelity; in the increase and power of popery; and in the relations of these to each other.

There is evidently a kind of worship of democracy, and even an endeavor on the part of some to identify it with Christianity, without reference to the materials of which it is composed. But while a democracy in which every man should obey God, and love his neighbor as himself, would be well; an infidel and atheistic democracy, manifesting, as it certainly would, the animalism of the brute with the art and malignity of the fiend, would give us the most vivid image of hell upon earth of which we can conceive. That there is, through the prevalence of this spirit, a gradual lowering down of authority, and loosening of restraint, and tendency to mobs, and a feeling of insecurity, cannot be denied; and than such a spirit, not all the art this side the pit, no, nor in it, could have devised a more appropriate agency to be made ready to the hands of the jesuit, by which, in the very name, and under the guise of liberty, he might heave from its base, and cause to go down in a sea of anarchy and blood that standing point, which, in the name of humanity, we had reached—that πον στω which we fondly hoped we had found, where we could place the lever that should lift a fallen world to freedom and to God. This Rome and

despotism well understand, and they are pouring in the materials of which mobs are made. Then there is the spirit of infidelity in its various forms, more extensive than many suppose. There is the coarse and brutal infidelity of ignorance and vice, that bandages its own eyes, and under the goad of passion, rushes into sin as the horse into the battle; then there is the more refined and plausible infidelity that would fain pluck leaves from the tree of science to cover its nakedness; and then there is that, perhaps not less dangerous and unvenomed, which may be found coiled up under the broad robe of latitudinarian charity with which some Christian sects choose to cover themselves; and between this too, in whatever form, and popery, it will yet be found that there is a deep affinity. They have need of each other. It is upon such forms as those of popery, that in those hours of misgiving which it always has, infidelity loves to pillow its head; and then, with her penances and superstitions, the arch-sorceress well knows how to drug into stupidity the little conscience it had left, and, in the name of God, to put into its hand the dagger of persecution with which to stab the vitals of liberty and true religion. And when we remember how rapidly popery is increasing, and that it has lost none of its art, or of its blood-thirsty spirit, we cannot fail to feel how ominous it is that, on such a wonderful theatre, these three elements are beginning to come into such close and extraordinary contact. It would not be surprising if, as they mingle, scenes should be revealed which may find a parallel only in the French revolution. And then, when we remember the materials of hate between the native and foreigner, between the capitalist and the laborer, and hear the low growl of agrarianism; when we remember sectional jealousies and the distracting relations of slavery; and see how easily the standard of a civil and a servile war might be unfurled, we cannot feel the burden that rests upon the church in reference to the cause of Christ here, or in foreign lands, is likely to be diminished in our day. No; it will be increased. The call for prayer, and contributions, and effort, will be more and more urgent, till, under the pressure of such a burden, we can only go and cast it upon the Lord.

And this, fathers and brethren, I now invite you to do. Your burden is great. To you the churches are looking, to you the missionaries, to you the heathen. Upon you are dependant thousands and tens of thousands for the bread of life, and from stations upon which the sun never sets, that gleam amid the darkness of heathenism, along the continents and the islands of the sea, they turn their eyes to you, and they beseach you, by the love and example of Christ, not to "fail or to be discouraged till judgment shall be set in the earth, and the isles shall wait for his law. But great as the burden is, cast it upon the Lord, and he shall sustain you.

I cannot but think that in this simple principle of taking up just the burden that God would lay upon us, and then casting it upon Him, we find our true position—the only position of true dignity, of usefulness and peace. Thus doing, it is evident that the simpler and more spiritual is our object, the less embarrassed and the more efficient may be our action. But whatever object we may feel bound to adopt, we shall never become committed to any thing but to the cause of God. Thus shall we be saved both embarrassment and disappointment. We shall never become committed to any former course of action. Our prejudices and pride of consistency we shall sacrifice before this principle. Dear as this Board is to us, we shall not be committed to it, except as its cause s the cause of God. Dear and cherished as other objects may be, we shall not wish to press them here, except as by so doing, we may promote the cause of God. This principle will teach us where to yield, and where to be firm; and while we are careful to take up each one his own burden, it will lead us also, in meekness and forbearance, *to bear one another's burdens*, and so fulfil the law of Christ. Thus doing, the embarrassments and complications that grow out of selfishness and pride, and a desire to promote personal objects will be removed, and we shall all hear the one voice of the Captain of our salvation, as he leads his hosts to the conflict, saying, "FOLLOW ME."

Fathers and brethren, in thus calling upon you to cast your burden upon the Lord, I cannot forget that I am speaking to those who have long known what it is to bear burdens, and to cast them upon Him—yes, and *to be sustained, too.* I speak to some upon whom the burden of this cause lay in its infancy. Do you remember, venerable men, how heavily it pressed upon you then, when you had small means, and no experience, and all was dark? And where did you go? Do you remember when you saw the sails expand and lessen in the distance, that bore the first missionaries from these shores? And where did you go then? Do you remember when your missionaries seemed to be shut out from the whole heathen world? And where did you go then? Do you remember, fathers and brethren, more recent days of darkness, and how you went to God, and how he removed you out of a strait into a large place, and compassed you about with songs of deliverance? Do you remember the darkness that might be felt when the commercial pressure was on the nation, and when, as the burden was rolled upon God in prayer, his Spirit came down into the special meeting, and made the place as Goshen, where there was light? Did we ever, in all the history of this Board, cast our burden upon the Lord, and find his promise fail? No, never; and we never shall.

To thee, then, O thou God of missions, according to thy command, we unitedly come and plead thy promise. This is not our

cause, but thine. Thou knowest perfectly the burden that is pressing upon us in bearing it forward. That burden we cast upon thee. SUSTAIN THOU US.—Amen.

SERMON CCCCVIII.

RESULTS OF FAITHFUL PREACHING.

"Rightly dividing the word of truth."—2 TIM. ii. 15.

THE passage from which the text is taken decides for the gospel minister *what* he shall preach, and *how* he shall preach; and bids him bring up all the faculties of his mind, and the affections of his heart, to the performance of the duty. "Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, *rightly dividing the word of truth.*"

To meet this demand, the minister must *pray* much—and *study much*—and *think much.* He is bound to conform in all things to the Bible, but that bond imposes no fetters on the intellect.

The solemn obligation which the text imposes on every minister of the gospel rightly to divide the word of truth, is seen in the important results which it produces.

1. It alarms the sinner.

Impenitent sinners are so much absorbed in their attention to "the things that perish," that, if left to the influence of their own propensities and pursuits, they would never wake up, and flee from the wrath to come. Dealing with them at a distance, through labored essays upon the excellence of virtue, or the general odiousness of vice, where timid and feeble appeals, if any at all, are made to the conscience, does not meet the desperate exigencies of their condition. Their immortal souls are soon to lose their hold upon the privileges of probation, and go away into eternity, with all the awful issues of the judgment dependant upon their moral character. With all their frailty and responsibility, they manifest an inherent repugnance to the message of salvation, and even when partially aroused by its light and conviction, tending back again to the slumbers of sin and moral death. Oh! the messenger sent by God to warn them, *must be in earnest.* The solemn and searching declarations of the Bible are the only means he can use to save them; let him determine therefore to seek the heart and conscience, if possible, to lodge the truth so deeply there, that the soul cannot rest under its pungent

application. While it is the effectual working of God's spirit that brings the sinner to submission, let the preacher feel, too, that this is to be expected just in proportion to the plainness and faithfulness with which the truth is applied. That God has fitted it to this end, and given it "his power unto salvation," and made it "as the fire and the hammer which breaketh the rock." Rare indeed is that hard heart to be found, that can remain altogether unaffected when brought directly beneath its mighty influence. And if any thing is to reach and rescue the sinner, the plain truth of God, thus pointedly applied by the preacher, and blessed by the Holy Ghost, must do it. Its unyielding claims must be made to follow him up from one hiding place to another, till he yields the weapons of his rebellion, and bows in allegiance to his rightful sovereign.

2. It points the convicted sinner to a Saviour.

The full and clear exhibition of the doctrines of the Gospel is the only method of setting before the sinner his *remedy*, as well as his *danger*. Jesus Christ must be presented as the centre of the great system of gospel truth, and all the lines of direction turned toward, and meeting in, his atoning sacrifice. This is the only preaching that can ever meet the sinner's wants, or minister to the sinner's safety. The heart of the most deeply convicted man is still, "deceitful above all things and desperately wicked," and unless the plain doctrines of the cross be kept distinctly before him, he will, most assuredly, run off into some one of the ten thousand by-paths which lead downwards from the way of life, and, dying, leave his blood on the skirts of that unfaithful watchman who neglected to warn and guide him. He must preach plain truth, and deal with souls in solemn earnestness; and while trembling under the deep conviction of their sin, *they* cry—"Men and brethren, what shall we do to be saved?" *he* must be ready to give the explicit answer—"Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world."

3. It reaches the hiding place of the deceiver.

We may be as cautious as we will, in the reception of members to the Church of Christ, but such is the deceitfulness of the human heart, and such the impossibility for moral eyes to read its secret character, that the self-deceiver and the hypocrite will get within the fold. There is reason to fear, that all our churches contain some, perhaps many, to whom the Judge at the last day will say, "Depart from me, I never knew you."

But dark as is the concealment in which the character of the heart is often veiled from the eye of man, the preacher has always the opportunity of bringing the searching light of divine truth to shine in upon this darkness. It is his duty to do it often. With

all the clearness of the inspired word, let the features of *true religion be delineated, as distinguished from all counterfeits*—let him tell, from the Bible, how a renewed heart *must feel*, and a renewed man *must act;* and let him put the touchstone round to every member's conscience; and self-deception is undeceived, and hypocrisy unmasked. The truth becomes "a discerner of the thoughts and intentions of the heart;" and by it, many a mask is torn off, and many a false refuge pulled down.

4. It reclaims the backslider.

Oh! how often have we occasion to heave the sigh over the returning coldness and indifference of those whose glowing zeal seemed once so quenchless! How often—to apply the apostrophe of the affectionate apostle—"ye did run well, who did hinder you?" Many begin fair, and with glowing love and zeal in the cause of Christ, "run well" for a season. But alas! a returning absorption in the business and pursuits of the world throws its chilling influence over them, and the warmth and glow of spiritual life seems well nigh extinct. A faithful and affectionate pastor weeps over their sad condition, and grieves under the discouragement of their withering example.

But, thanks to God, if they are the real children of his grace, he hath put within his word an influence to thaw and melt their frozen hearts—a power that shall rouse them from their guilty slumbers. The minister of the Lord Jesus Christ is bound to great faithfulness on this point. He must use the word of God with a plainness and distinctness of application which shall reach the object. Let him set before them their violated vows—their broken covenant—their destructive influence—the awful doubt which hangs over a once hopeful experience—and the dishonor done to Him whose holy name they bear; and, under the blessing of Almighty God, he shall have the satisfaction to see them return with weeping, confession, and renewed dedication to the Saviour. The sheep that has strayed away, and long wandered upon the mountains, shall thus be found, and borne back rejoicing.

5. It makes decided, practical Christians.

So far as preaching can minister to the establishment of the christian, it is in presenting the word of truth plainly, and applying it faithfully. From the cares, and toils, and perhaps trials of the week, he takes his seat in the sanctuary on the Sabbath, to be fed with the bread of eternal life. The preacher sets before him the plain doctrines and duties of the Bible—warms his heart by the clear illustration of the truth as it is in Jesus—cheers his soul by some distinct delineation of that "hope which is set before him in the Gospel"—and throws the light, and life, and joy of salvation all around him, in the bright illumination of some

precious promise of his Saviour; and oh! from that consecrated place the holy man goes home refreshed, comforted, strengthened, "able to give a reason for the hope that is in him," and testifying that—however it may have been with *others*—the Sabbath has been *his* delight, and the sanctuary, to *him*, "the gate of heaven."

Happy the meek and humble christian, from the plain, serious, faithful preaching of the gospel, gains clear apprehensions of truth and duty—becomes "mighty in the scriptures"—receives a directing, quickening, sanctifying influence; and thus, "strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might," he lives a *decided* christian—a *practical* christian—a *happy* christian—the faithful minister's "star in his crown of rejoicing."

REFLECTIONS.

1. The Minister of the Gospel should feel his own, and his hearers' dependence upon the Holy Ghost.

Let the church or the ministry renounce their dependence upon the spirit of God, and the day of revivals has gone by, the glory is departed, the gospel, with all its aptitude to move and melt the human heart, is powerless. So "fully set in them to do evil," are the hearts of the children of men, that with all their powers of free agency, their obligations, and their opportunities, they "will not come to Christ that they might have life."

The preacher needs this divine influence, to enlighten an otherwise darkened understanding, and warm an otherwise cold heart. Talent, and learning, and eloquence, are all in vain in his great work, without the help of God. He will prove but "a blind leader of the blind." When Paul planted and Apollos watered, God must give the increase; and much more in the decay of primitive zeal and faithfulness is the necessity of this holy influence manifest.

The people need this influence. Without it, no matter how great may be the zeal and earnestness of the preacher; how glowing his descriptions; or how warm and tender his entreaties and expostulations, they will *certainly*, but as *freely* as certainly, resist the truth, and go down to death their own destroyers. Let, then, neither preacher or hearer ever separate the word of divine truth from the Holy Ghost, who inspired and applies it.

2. The preacher should feel, that the truth he delivers is as applicable to himself as to his hearers.

God has not sent angels to bear the tidings of peace and pardon to a ruined world. He has put this commission into the hands of those who lie under the same condemnation as the men to whom they bear it. They are bound by the same authority—amenable to the same tribunal—and dependent upon the same grace. Dying men, preach to dying men. How unseemly! how revolting is it

if the preacher appear to stand apart from his hearers; and, elevating himself above them, speak the promises, or proclaim the threatenings of the Bible, as if from a sphere without, and beyond, their personal application.

When, then, the preacher goes forth to this great work, and bears the message of his Master to dying men, let him always feel that his own eternal interests are involved in the reception of the same offers he bears to them; and that his own salvation depends upon a hearty compliance with the self-same terms of mercy. This will spread its influence over all his ministry. It will infuse a softening influence through all his appeals and warnings. Every subject will then be invested with the importance and earnestness of a kindred interest and a personal application. The realities of the sinner's guilt and danger will then be disclosed with all the melting tenderness of his own deep experience; and the high hopes, and holy joys, of God's redeemed will flow out from a heart that feels, and a soul that glows with the same heavenly aspirations. The deep sincerity of his own emotion sends a softening influence around, arrests attention, and helps to fasten conviction on the conscience. It is the way to "save his own soul and those who hear him."

3. The weighty responsibilities resting upon both the preacher and the hearers of the Gospel.

A burden, such as no other creature bears, is laid upon the gospel minister. Undying souls are committed to his charge, and he is required "to watch for them as one that must give account." He will be "a savor of life unto life, or of death unto death" to them all. His influence, either for good or for evil, will be widespread, and powerful. Deathless spirits will go off into eternity, bearing the stamp which his hand has put upon them; and the impression will last, unfaded, away beyond the issues of the final judgment. The personal regard and affection of his people, desirable as it is, is of infinitely less consequence than the approbation of his own conscience and of his Saviour. The prosperity of an important branch of Zion is committed to every settled pastor. The stability of its christian character—the efficiency of its christian efforts—and the power of its christian influence—so far as human instrumentality can go—are laid in his hand, and at his responsibility. To his faithfulness is committed the important work of guiding, and strengthening, the new converts to Christ, and the warning, and convicting, and converting of those still "without hope and God in the world." Faithfulness in all the departments of his sacred office, is the only course of success or safety; and, especially, faithfulness in delivering the message which he bears from God to men. "Woe be to him," not only if he do not "preach"—but woe is his if he do not preach "the gospel."

But this responsibility comes not alone upon the minister. The execution of his official duties imposes corresponding obligations upon his people. They can no more shake off their responsibility than he can *his*. If he must *preach*, they must *hear, believe and obey;* and if the day is coming when *he* must give up his account to God, "how he has preached," so the same day will lay the necessity upon *them* to give an account "how they have heard." And let it be remembered, that the *same truth* he is bound to deliver, they are bound to receive. Neither he, nor they, can exercise their own choice in this respect. God has long since settled this whole question, by saying to his ministers—"Go ye into all the world, and preach *the Gospel* to every creature"—and by saying of every hearer—"He that believeth shall be saved, but he that believeth not shall be damned." The same Gospel, which he must preach, they must believe, or perish. Those feelings which rise up against the preacher for the plainness of his dealing with your consciences, rest assured, my hearers, strike a higher object, and are directed against a holier Being, than the mortal man whose faithfulness has excited them. God has put his own "mind and will" into his revelation, and it is *his* authority that will sustain and defend it.

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THE ECLIPSED LUMINARY.

"If, therefore, the night that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness?"—MATT. vi, 23.

OUR Savior, in this connexion, brings an illustration from the eye. *If thine eye be single*, that is, if it be sound, healthy, *thy whole body will be full of light.* The individual will perceive clearly, and walk correctly: he will be, not only a light to himself, but a safe guide to others.

But if the eye is diseased—double, wavering, then the whole body is full of darkness. Every thing is confused, and the individual not only stumbles himself, but all who depend upon him, or follow him, stumble likewise.

The light in a person, strictly speaking, is reason and conscience—his intellectual and moral nature.

The conscience corrected, and the heart purified by truth, enable him both to see and to shine. The light of truth, of conscience, and a holy character, extinguished, and darkness put where there was, and where, from the very nature of the case, there should be light—but instead of the light, becomes truly very *great darkness.* The principle then is simply this: if where light was and light should be, there is put darkness, *the darkness is very great.* To one who has always been blest with vision, who has looked freely forth upon all the beauties and wonders of nature and art, and who has always directed at will his own steps, but whose sight should be suddenly destroyed, and darkness at once fill and surround him—to him who is the subject of the calamity, and remembers the

contrast, how *great the darkness.* Or take the case of one who has been spiritually enlightened—enlightened from above, who was filled with light, and became a body of light to others, let all that light be put out, and darkness take its place, how great is the darkness?

This is the sentiment I propose to illustrate at the present time. *That the Christian when he ceases to shine and darkness comes in the place of his light, it is very great darkness.* This is a case which not unfrequently occurs. It is often an actual condition of things. But if a *true* Christian, the dimness, the darkness are but temporary; the foulness will be purged out, the cloud will pass away, and he will yet shine on earth, and shine yet brighter in heaven.

It is a sad truth, implied in our text, and stated in our proposition, that the Christian does become darkness in the world sometimes; and the process is an easy one, and easily explained. If *his faith* is not corrupted, the great *objects* of his faith pass from his view; rather he turns away from them; they are lost sight of for a season. Then his conscience falls into slumber, the heart grows callous and is soon defiled. Thus becoming corrupt and worldly within, he is irregular and disobedient without; his conduct is a departure from the spirit and the precepts of the gospel; his life is wanting in all the clear manifestations of Godliness. While the *fact* of the change is thus sad, the *effects* of it are far more so.

The Christian changed from light to darkness—*how great is that darkness!* This appears, if we consider,

I. In the first place, *the mere negative loss*, in his forbearing to let his light shine. He has been made a luminous body, but he has ceased to shine. How much need of his light in the scene in which he moves. How much darkness to be removed, how little moral light shed for its removal; how much good he would do, by steadily shining; how much *did he* do in the days of his soundness and integrity. The world are reminded of truth and duty, and the way to gain God's favor and final acceptance. They are made to see that there is difference between him that serveth God, and him that serveth him not. They see the power of the religious principle—the excellence and the loveliness of true piety. Impressions are made that are abiding. Some are convinced and won to the way of life: the clear and beautiful shining of that disciple at once draws them, and illumines the way of their return to God. Many may be, yea, often *are*, drawn to the path of peace, by the attractive radiance of the pure, faithful disciple.

Another consideration, is *the great expense at which he was prepared to shine.* He who was the brightness of the Father's

glory, and who is now the light of the world, came down to the earth, and died upon the cross, that the sins of that disciple might be blotted out, that the Spirit might be sent to renew his nature, and so fit him to reflect the beams of the Sun of Righteousness, and be a living light in his sphere. But when he ceases to shine, all that expense is so far lost. Christ's object in dying for him, and changing him by his Spirit, was not to save his single solitary soul, but that he should be an agent in saving others. But when he ceases to shine, he ceases to do any good in the world. All the blessed effects, we have considered, cease. There is a great and sad loss—a loss in part of the Savior's death for him, and the Savior's work of renovation upon his heart—a loss utterly, of all the good impressions and saving reformations, which might and ought to have been produced, by the power of his shining—the light of his example. In view, then, of the *negative* consideration, the mere loss experienced, we may begin to exclaim, *how great the darkness!* But the exclamation becomes more emphatic when we consider,

II. In the next place, *some of the positive evils in the case.* It is not a simple subtraction of so much good which might have been done; because there is no neutrality in influence. He that is not for Christ is against him. If we gather not with him, we scatter abroad. If we shed not light, we shed darkness, and how great must be that darkness.

Because it is *a very conspicuous darkness*—a darkness peculiarly visible. It is so, on account of the change which has occurred. Yesterday, it is remembered, he was a shining body; to-day, it is seen, he is obscured, and sheds no rays. A change, so great as from light to darkness, is a very notable charge. Multitudes who gave little heed to the shining of that Christian, are all eagerness and wonder the moment he ceases to shine; thus it become a peculiarly visible darkness.

It is an incongruous, unnatural darkness, inasmuch as it is a body of light, so to speak, radiating darkness. How strange! what has happened? Who can account for so monstrous a phenomenon? Were it the darkness of night, it would not be thought of; it would be congenial, and all would go to their repose. But it is the darkness of an eclipse; how much greater in its effects, than the darkness of the thickest night. To have the sun pass out of sight in the order of nature, is a trifle. But to have him turn into blackness in his meridian position, to have night, as it were, issuing from the face of the King of day, fills all minds with amazement.

When the Christian becomes darkness, it is the darkness of an eclipsed luminary; and we know that men will gaze at such a sight—all eyes will centre there. How wonderful was the scene of the sun's momentary, utter extinction, which occurred early in the present century. All eyes, at that in-

stant. were directed upward—the interest growing more and more intense. as the darkness spread over the disk of the great luminary. until the last ray went out, when an involuntary shuddering. seized every heart. The light that was in the sun then became darkness: and who that saw it has forgotten, and yet who can describe. *how great was that darkness.*

The vividness of the impression which this sort of darkness makes. is another consideration to be put into the estimate. It so infixes itself in the memory—the world gaze and never forget: they carry. it may be. the recollection to hell with them. and there curse forever the memory of these eclipsed luminaries.

It is a darkness the wicked love to look at and feed upon; they seem to have an intense relish for it. Like the owl at heavy mid-night.they strain and distend their utmost capacity of vision. that they may drink in the congenial gloom. Not only do they love an interpretation of the Bible. which blots out all the distinctive glory. and searching meaning of this book. they love much more. a comment in the life of the disciple. which contradicts the voice, or mitigates the light issuing from these holy pages.

But I have not said the whole about this darkness:—not only is it a conspicuous darkness; an incongruous, unnatural darkness; an impressive darkness: an attractive darkness; it is injurious upon the course of the world—fatal to the souls of men. We have seen. first. that it is a sight, which brings all eyes to behold it: then it brings destruction upon multitudes who do behold it.

The influence of the lapsed. obscured christian, goes to accomplish all this mischief. because it tends to unsettle the minds of men as to the truth of religion, and of all the great doctrines of religion. His own principles become unsound, and this is the darkening of his own mind: then he diffuses these unsound principles. and so darkens others. His standing, as a disciple of Christ. enables him to do it. He gives currency to error—to false doctrine, as he could not do in other circumstances; for he is clothed with a species of authority. for his work of corruption and ruin. He strikes a heavy blow, and it falls upon the very foundations. The sentiment is deposited in the breasts of many, to work there silent and deadly, that there is no reality in religion; it is an empty cheat: this great spiritual change so much talked about.is nought but delusion: it has no power upon the character—nothing permanent in the results.

But his influence goes not only to corrupt the principles of men. it corrupts also the *practice*. Such an one leads the way in bad practice. He authenticates and gives currency to disobedience—the breaking down of God's laws. If he is

a sabbath breaker, he brings, so far as he can, the authority of Christ and his religion, to sanction sabbath breaking; if fraudulent, to sanction fraud; if impure, to sanction impurity. So he propagates his misdeeds: he rears up and draws after him a train to do as he does; and then to shelter themselves from rebukes without, and goadings within, under the wing of his religious profession—under the authority of his christian life.

It is true the Bible speaks differently, yea oppositely: if these followers of the blind guides would go there, they would de instructed and corrected. But the christian's life—the spirit, the conduct of the professor of godliness, is all the bible multitudes ever read. Here the page they gaze upon; here the text they quote; here the authority they bow to: they get their impressions and notions here, and so walk according to this rule. Some are made skeptics; the lapsed christian's life, the argument—the dark demonstration, which has turned them into infidels, and profane and bitter revilers. Others say, 'if that be religion, we wish to have nothing to do with it; if that be a state of grace, the Lord grant that we may live and die in a state of nature.' Others are put perfectly at rest on the great question of salvation. They think they see so little difference between men of the church and men of the world, there is very little ground for alarm. If the former are safe, the latter cannot be in any great danger. God certainly will not predicate opposite destinies, upon distinctions of character, too small and too faint to be seen. Others, who feel some solicitude about their souls, and try somewhat for a better state, know not whither to go, nor what they must become. The way is all dark to them. They wander wearily about, and find no savior, no hope. They fix their eye, it may be, upom some dim, doubtful disciple, in order that their case may be an easy one, and then settle down on something short of Christ. There can be no question, but one false hope begets another; a low, uncertain character for godliness, propagates its kind. The consequence is, that many, who seem to set out for heaven, lose their way, and lose their souls. How sad, that the person who should have illumined his path, and led him onward, and upward, was the dark impediment, over which he stumbled and perished. Had that christian been a light in his sphere, that friend, that neighbor, would have gone to heaven: his light being darkness, that friend, that neighbor, went to hell. *How great was that darkness.*

Suppose, now, that all the christians in a given place were like him—the entire church in that place obscured—all her light put out, all distinctive truth blotted from her creed, and silenced in her pulpit, and wiped from the life of her members; and error and dishonesty and all forms of ungod-

liness put in stead, and going forth, as it were, under heaven's great seal; who can estimate the condition, or paint the blackness of that darkness? We call it a sad condition in a community, if there is nothing *in favor* of religion. No lights alluring to heaven, no lives speaking for God and the soul; no characters that are living arguments for his truth and cause. But infinitely more sad, if every thing in the name and form and profession of religion, goes directly to discredit religion; the lives, which should be arguments in favor of God's truth and cause, are all arguments against it; the influence which should press toward heaven, become not merely negative but push positively and mightily toward hell. Native, full grown, unregenerated sinners, are comparatively harmless, let them constitute the great mass of a population; but this regeneration backward—this falsifying the true and the holy—this putting out light and putting on darkness instead, making men doubt, making them disbelieve, making them stumble—solemnly authenticating the way to hell—giving a sort of sacredness to the broad road, and giving to multitudes, not the baptism *of* fire, but a baptism, a sealing *for* the fire which shall never be quenched—what mind other than the Infinite Mind can take in the whole extent of the evil.

I have made the supposition of a church all turned to darkness, and drawn the picture, and presented it to your imagination, that you may see and feel and exclaim—*how great the darkness.* In making some remarks upon this sentiment and discussion, it comes very obviously to speak,

1. In the first place, *of the responsibility of the Christian*—his responsibility, as one always in view, belong to a city set on a hill, having no neutrality, always either for his Master, or against him; always shedding either light or darkness; if darkness—darkness of a strange and destructive sort—his responsibility as one, shut up to this necessity, and to abide under it forever. He may go back; but he never can *get* back, to be a simple, original, impenitent sinner as he once was. That condition was comparatively a negative one. Now he is chained to the necessity of doing, in a pre-eminent sense, positive good or evil. He is professedly regenerated, and it will be in its fruits, in a pre-eminent degree, a regeneration for heaven or hell. There is a great responsibility in this sort of necessity, abiding upon him, and holding him, as with links of adamant, to these immense consequences. If he is right in heart, right in light—living devotedly to him who died to save; everything—time, talents, property, consecrated to the cause of redemption, there is no telling what his Lord may enable him to do. Some vast tract of desert may become, through him, a well watered garden—some hundreds, perhaps thousands of souls, may stand up in heaven,

and point to him, as the author under God, of their mighty joys. If he pursue the other course, the consequences will be equally vast and interminable, but directly the opposite. Darkness will take the place of the light, death eternal the place of the life eternal. Oh, the guilt of the perversion; the responsibility of the substitution. He who substitutes a base coin for a pure one, does a slight injury. He who puts a deadly potion in the place of a healthful beverage, does a great wrong, and incurs a heavy responsibility. He who extinguishes the beacon-light, on the rock bound coast, amid the raging of the midnight storm, putting darkness before the mariner's eye, and despair in the mariner's heart, brings upon himself greater guilt and a weightier doom. But he, who puts out the light of truth and of a holy example, and puts instead, the darkness of gospel error, and christian sinning, causing multitudes to make shipwreck of faith and of their souls too—that person with the vows of God upon him, goes up higher, far higher in the scale of guilt, and will go, unless he repent, far lower in the gulf of fire beneath. How solemn, *awful* almost, the christian's responsibility. Let me die and go alone to my place, rather than administer to any such results as these.

But there is no reason to shrink or be afraid. There is grace enough in Christ; strength enough there; you shall not ask for it in vain. There is light enough in that great Luminary of the world and the Universe. Go live right under those beams, and you shall have light. We are only to go to the fountain *there* and take care of the fountain *here*, and we shall be full of light, and spread light, and do better for our Master than we sometimes have done.

2. I remark, secondly, we see how it comes to pass, that the faults, the sins, the derelictions of christians and the church, are so commonly exaggerated by men of the world. It seems, from what is said often in this quarter, that there is very little that is just, or lovely, or of good report in the church; and every thing in it that is dishonest, contentious and hateful. There is hypocrisy there, and every form and style of villainy—a very corrupt concern, Now this is gross and injurious falsehood—to be attributed in part to the world's hatred of godliness. They first *wish* to have it so, then they *make* it so. And they are helped to make it so, by the operation of the principle in our text.

The sinning of Christ's subjects is very conspicuous sinning. The sinning of the devil's subjects, very much more out of sight. In this latter case, it is a kingdom of darkness; they are deeds of darkness, done in an atmosphere of darkness. Who sees, or cares, or says anything about it. But in the latter case, it being darkness in a luminous body, as we have shown, it is clearly visible; and the strangeness and

incongruity of the thing, bring all men to stare at it. We know that a little spot in the sun, gets more notice than all the sun's brightness; one single hour of eclipse, induces more attention, more talk, than ten years of his glorious shining. Here now is the principle: hence it comes, that the church suffers so greatly, from small departures, limited offences; hence if one member suffers, all suffer with it: if one is charged with sin, all, in a sense, are charged with the same. The one sin becomes multiplied into a hundred sins. The little dim spot is spread and stretched, till it seems to cover the whole body with darkness.

It is admitted there is wrong in the church; but I rejoice to know that the wrong, in most instances, is as nothing, compared with what many in the world would make it. It is admitted there is not all the truth and righteousness in the church that there should be, and will be. But I rejoice in the fact, that there is more there than in all other places beside. I do believe this is a fact; indeed I believe that nearly all the heaven accepted righteousness on the earth, is in the church; though there be some darkness in her, still nearly all the light is there. And yet it is true, that vast multitudes go down to destruction, because Christians and the church are not what they should be.

3. I wish to make a third remark on this fact; first, give the reason of it, and then show that there is no reason in it. The reason of this fact—that so many perish on account of the inconsistencies of Christians, is found in the principle of our text, *how great the darkness*. It may be in itself a little spot; yet it fills the whole of the perverse eye, so that it can see nought but darkness. The consequence is, religion is not recommended, but stands dishonored before him; he rejects it; perhaps he scorns it; he keeps his sin, he comforts himself in his rebellion; and in the end he is a ruined being. This is the reason of his course. But as I said, there is no reason in it, because the church is not the ultimate standard. Christians are not the bible after all, though they be the only bible multitudes read. God has another bible back of them, and that is the bible God will support—that the standard he will bring and hold men to, and judge them by. His professed disciples may falsify every page, every doctrine, every precept; but that does not make it false. It abides notwithstanding, and will abide, as eternal truth—its promises—its threatenings—its uttered doom will be accomplished. Now, cannot rational men see, have they not sense enough to see, that this is the standard they ought to come to? Though all the church were unmitigated blackness, there is light here. Does not the caviller see, it is not enough that he has reasoned down the Christian's life? There is no safety for him till he has gone beyond and reasoned down the Bible—

not only blotted out the arguments arising from the Christian's practice, but blotted out the arguments also, embodied in God's great and authoritive sayings. Even then in this extreme supposition, that it is all darkness on our part, where is the reason of the caviller's course? There is none —it is madness.

Take now the case as it is. Christians, as a body, do not falsify the Bible. Certainly there are those who illustrate all its spirit and teaching; there are many who do this; they are light in the world; they perfect, and point, and clinch the Bible argument. They speak in their life, as God speaks in his word. Is there any reason, I ask, in making all this nothing?—all this light nothing?—all the sun's shining nothing; his spots everything? God calls attention to this light. Men choose the darkness; they might walk to heaven in this light; there is enought of it, and more than enough. They prefer to wrap themselven up in the darkness they find, and in that go down to death. They allow one professor's life, that is wrong, to sway them more than ten or twenty Christian lives that are right. Is there any reason in this? Ye men of reason and understanding, is there any?

How this course must appear hereafter. I have thought, sometimes, how the lost must feel when they look back and consider on what foolish grounds they went to hell; with what contemptible sophistry they were led on; with what meagre, miserable bait, they allowed the devil to take them.

O, my friends, this is far reaching business. You are fast moving to the eternal scene; there you will encounter a most searching light; there you will have to do, not with fables, but with the verities of God's unchanging word; there you will meet, not shadows, but solid and overwhelming realities. Look now to the right things. Yield to the dictates of reason, and to the urgencies of the gospel, and seek the things which are above, and perish not from that high position you occupy, of light and privilege and hallowed influence. If you do, your's will be a most fearful doom.

SERMON CCCCX.

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THE WAGES OF SIN.

"The wages of sin is death."—Rom. vi. 23.

That there are good and sufficient reasons why the transgressors of God's law should receive a recompense of evil, and that a woe will come upon the workers of iniquity, are truths which need no labored proof. With the consciousness of doing wrong are associated in every human mind a sense of ill desert, and a fearful looking for of judgment. In these respects, they who have not the written law, are a law to themselves. Even "the fool," who should say in his heart, "there is no God," would be very likely to expect, both in relation to himself and others, that the perpetrator of high-handed wickedness will receiee by some fatality the reward of his doings. And yet it would not be safe to rely upon human estimates of the turptitude of sin, and of the evils which it merits. In deciding upon these subjects, we decide in our own case; we judge and condemn ourselves. Whatever punishment we admit to be the wages of sin, we acknowledge that we ourselves deserve. The slightest knowledge of human nature is sufficient to show that the criminal at the bar is not the person correctly to estimate his own guilt, and to determine the degree of punishment which may justly be inflicted. Not only are we liable to an erroneous judgment, by reason of the blinding influence of an inordinate self-love, but our views of the evil nature and tendencies of sin are of necessity very limited. Some sins are manifestly injurious to him who commits them, to the individual against whom they are committed, or to society in general. But the injury result-

ing in many instances, especially from sins of the heart, is not so conspicuous. Much of the evil which sin tends to produce is prevented by an over-ruling Providence. We often see conduct in itself sinful, made an occasion of good. Even when the injurious effects of transgressions are the most obvious, we do not always consider, we are unable fully to comprehend its malignity, in its relations to God and his kingdom. Very plainly, therefore, we are not competent to determine the degree and the duration of that punishment, which the sinner deserves, but shall be almost sure exceedingly to underrate his sinfulness and ill desert. On these points we need a revelation from God; and since a revelation has been granted, communicating the needed instruction, it becomes us with unhesitating confidence to receive it. What sin is, in its nature, its effect, its tendencies, and what amount of evil is due for every instance of transgression, is perfectly clear to the mind of God; and in the volume of inspiration we have his testimony. One very important declaration relative to the demerit of sin, is that of the inspired apostle in my text. The wages of sin is death. Sin is the master whom the sinner serves, and death is the compensation due for his services. The wages of sin is death, "but the gift of God," to them who serve him, "is everlasting life through Jesus Christ our Lord." The wages of sin, the gift of God. To the servant of sin death is the deserved recompense; to the righteous eternal life is the gift, through a Mediator of infinite grace.

The assertion of the text is, that the deserved recompense of sin is death. In this assertion what are we to understand by the word death? Let this point be settled, we shall then have the divine testimony respecting the ill desert of sin, most clearly and fully given.

If the text is viewed in its connexion, it will be plainly seen that the death intended is an evil, to be endured by the servants of sin only. Addressing himself to his brethren in Christ, the apostle inquires, "What fruit had ye then in those things, wherefore ye are now ashamed? For the end of those things is death; but now being made free from sin, and become the servants of God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life. For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord." Those vicious practices in which you formerly indulged, terminate in death. But the service of God will end in everlasting life. For death is the sinner's recompense; but upon the righteous God will bestow eternal life. Very evidently from the death here spoken of, the righteous are exempted. It cannot, therefore be temporal death, for this is common to all men. In this respect the servants of sin and the servants of God fare alike. Death in the text is not the dissolution of the body.

It is an evil to which the servant of sin, continuing such, is liable, in distinction from the servant of God; and it excludes those upon whom it is inflicted from eternal life. Sin rewards those who are under his dominion with death. But God bestows upon his faithful servants eternal life. In these statements it is fairly implied that those who inherit everlasting life do not suffer death; and that those who suffer death do not inherit life eternal. The end of a sinful course is death, but the end of those whose fruit is unto holiness is everlasting life. If the death intended were followed by eternal life, the end of those things would not be death, but the end of both the righteous and the wicked would be the same, and upon them both would be conferred the same gift of God. But according to the teaching of the apostle, they who receive the gift of eternal life are freed from that death, which is the wages of sin, and they to whom those wages are paid, do not receive that precious gift.

But if death in the sense of the text will exclude from eternal life, it must be either annihilation or endless misery. which of these two are intended, the text and context do not afford the means of deciding. Let us now inquire whether the term death be used in other parts of scripture, as in this portion of it, and if so, what additional light can be obtained respecting its meaning.

Now there are no words more frequently used in designating the rewards of the righteous and the wicked than life, and death As a motive to obedience the promise is given "he that doeth these things, shall live in them;" that is, shall prosper, shall be blessed in doing them. By the death denounced upon the transgressor in the declaration, "the soul that sinneth, it shall die," some calamity and suffering must be intended, the opposite of the blessedness connected with obedience. When the psalmist says, "thou wilt show me the way of life," when Solomon affirms, "the fear of the Lord is the fountain of life, wisdom is a tree of life to them who lay hold upon her, he who keepeth sound wisdom and instruction will find them the life of his soul," all must perceive that by life, not mere existence is intended, but happiness. On the other hand, when our Saviour declares, "he that believeth in me shall never die," "if a man keep my sayings he shall not see death;" no one supposes that the dissolution of the body is meant. "Whoso findeth me," said Divine Wisdom, "findeth life;" i. e. felicity and joy. "But all they that hate me, love death"—i. e. misery. They pursue the road to ruin with as much zeal as if this were the object of their affection and choice. "He that findeth his life shall lose it, and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it." Of this latter declaration the meaning must be, that he who from love to the Saviour sacrifices his earthly

life, as a martyr, shall inherit life eternal; and of the former, that he who preserves his earthly existence by denying Christ, shall lose life eternal. "There is," said the apostle John, "a sin unto death. I do not say that he shall pray for it." And why not pray for it? Plainly for this reason, that it is unto death. The meaning cannot be, that it will certainly issue in temporal death. For if this were all, it would not preclude prayer for pardon. The sin intended must be that "sin against the Holy Ghost, which will not be forgiven either in this world or in the next." "He that believeth on the Son of God, hath everlasting life;" i. e. everlasting felicity; "but he that believeth not the Son, shall not see life," shall not partake of everlasting felicity, "but the wrath of God abideth on him." Not to see life, in this passage, denoting, as we may with good reason suppose, the same thing with death in my text, is to be excluded from the blessedness of heaven, and to experience continued manifestations of the divine displeasure. The wrath of God would not be spoken of as abiding in one who was not in existence. The expression plainly signifies continued punishment, continued suffering.

I will now call your attention to a scriptural use of the terms life and death, differing somewhat from that which has been noticed. We read of being dead "in trespasses and sins;" "to be carnally minded is death;" "he who liveth in pleasure is dead while he liveth." On the other hand, we read of a "life" maintained by "faith in the Son of God;" and are told "that to be spiritually minded is life." In these instances death denotes a state of great moral corruption, and life a state of holiness. The former is the character of the human heart while unrenewed; the latter is the result of regenerating grace. And hence to be renewed in the spirit of one's mind is "to pass from death unto life." As holiness and happiness, sin and misery, are most intimately connected, it is not strange that the same words should be employed to signify both. The term life, when applied to the righteous, usualy, perhaps; includes the ideas of moral purity, and the happiness resulting from it. The life of the soul is a holy, happy existence. The death of the soul is a sinful, wretched existence. "He that loveth not his brother abideth in death. No murderer hath eternal life abiding in him." But in the heart of the true Christian eternal life does abide, for he is the subject of those holy affections which give present peace, and which brought to maturity will essentially constitute the blessedness of heaven. The death, on the contrary, in which the wicked abide, consists in those evil dispositions and habits which often occasion on earth great disquietude, and when fully matured, will produce unutterable anguish. In the sense now ex-

plained, our first parents died on the very day of their transgression, and the death, which then began to come upon them, has passed upon the whole race. "If one died for all, then were all dead." Not annihilated, but sunk in sin and misery; dead, as to God, holiness, and heaven. To those, in whom spiritual life has been commenced and is sustained by the renewing, sanctifying operations of the Holy Spirit, the gospel gives the assurance that they shall inherit life eternal. The "rest" into which by faith they "enter," shall be perfected in that unending rest which "remaineth for them" hereafter. And the death, in which the sinner now abides, will be consummated in that death, which they will experience who lose eternal life, upon whom the wrath of God abideth, and who never have forgiveness.

The evidence already adduced from other portions of the scripture, goes far to show, that by death, in my text and context, is not intended extinction of being, but a sinful, wretched existence that will never end. Other proof will now be alleged still more conclusive.

In the Revelation mention is made of the second death. "He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death." Here it is asserted that the faithful followers of Christ will not suffer the second death, and implied that others will. By the second death must be intended a calamity to be experienced after the dissolution of the body; the same, doubtless, that is signified by the death simply, when used in relation to the future, in other parts of scripture. Now what the revelator means by the second death he has very explicitly told us. "The fearful, and the unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolitors, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone. This is the second death." Rev. xxi. 8. To undergo the second death, then, is to have one's portion in the burning lake. Here we may notice,

1. The time intended. The inspired writer had seen a vision of the risen dead, standing before God, and judged according to their works. "And whosoever was not found written in the book of life, was cast into the lake of fire." Then he describes the blessedness of those whose names are written in the book of life, and immediately after declares, that the unbelieving and abominable shall suffer the second death. The time, then, in which the second death will be inflicted, is subsequent to the general resurrection and judgment.

2. The second death is a state of extreme suffering. It is represented as having one's part in a lake, burning with fire and brimstone. Very similar is the representation given by our Saviour, when he speaks of the wicked as being "cast, at the end of this world, into a furnace of fire; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

3, It will be a state of continued, endless suffering. In Rev. xx. 10, we are told that "the devil, which deceived the nations, was cast into the lake of fire, where the beast and false prophet are, and shall be tormented" (i. e. the devil, the beast, and false prophet, for the verb is plural,) "day and night, for ever and ever." Now the beast and false prophet are symbols of large classes of wicked men, and there is no evidence that they will suffer a punishment of longer duration than other wicked men. But their torments are to continue day and night for ever and ever. This phrase, for ever and ever, is used in the New Testament twenty times. In ten of these it is found in ascriptions of praise—as in the instance following—"to whom be glory for ever and ever." In five instances it expresses the duration of the divine existence, as when mention is made of "Him, who liveth for ever and ever." Once it is applied to the duration of God's spiritual kingdom—"And he shall reign for ever and ever." And once it expresses the perpetuity of that glory and felicity which the saints will enjoy—"they shall reign for ever and ever." In all these instances it signifies unquestionably endless duration. The same must be its meaning in the three other instances, in which it is used in relation to future punishment. One has been already quoted. The other two are as follows—"And her smoke rose up for ever and ever." "And the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever." If it is possible for language, unequivocally, to signify endless duration, it is signified in these passages. Our Saviour also told his disciples, and the declaration is five times repeated in six verses, Mark ix. 43—48, that the fire, into which the wicked will be cast, shall never be quenched. I know it may be said that, if the fire is unquenchable, it does not follow that the wicked will always be tormented by it. But if this were not the fact, what conceivable motive could our saviour have to declare that the fire would never be quenched? His intention was to awaken fear of the misery resulting from the indulgence of forbidden inclinations. But why should it alarm us that the fire is unquenchable, were it not for the apprehension that the pains occasioned by it will never cease? In the Apocalypse it is expressly asserted that "they shall be tormented for ever and ever."

Thus far my object has been to ascertain the scriptural meaning of the word death, when employed, as in the text and context, to denote those evils which are denounced against the wicked, in distinction from the righteous. These evils, it is evident, cannot consist in the dissolution of the body. As death is the end of a sinful course, and everlasting life of a holy one, as the sin unto death is a sin that will never be forgiven, and as expressions equivalent to death are, not

seeing and losing life eternal, an evil must be intended, excluding from eternal life, and this must be either annihilation or endless suffering. As the principal thing intended by life is happiness, the fruit of holiness, so by the death, contrasted with it, we are to understand a state of suffering, the fruit of sin, and since suffering thus occasioned, implies conscious existence under the continued dominion of sin, it cannot be annihiliation, but unending misery; the abiding of the wrath of God upon the wicked for ever. In this conclusion we are confirmed by what is said in the relation respecting the second death. This is explained by having one's portion in the lake of fire. But the fire in which the wicked will suffer is unquenchable, and they who are cast into it will be tormented for ever and ever.

Death, then, in the sense of my text, is endless misery. This is the wages of sin. Wages are the compensation due to any one for his services. The wages of sin are the compensation due to the servants of sin; in other words, the just recompense of sin, the punishment which the sinner deserves. Wages, usually, are a compensation previously agreed upon and promised: and when the apostle spoke of the wages of sin, he referred, without doubt to the penalty or curse of the divine law. This is the promised wages, so to speak, of the transgressor of the law; and it is death eternal and endless misery.

But "the law" of God "holy, just, and good," in its penalty, as well as in its precepts. To execute a punishment undeserved would be unjust and cruel; to threaten it as the award of justice would be a falsehood. Let not such cruel injustice or falsehood be charged upon God. Were the penalty of the law unjust there would be no grace in the gospel. Mercy need not interpose to redeem us from an unrighteous condemnation. Simple justice would demand it. When "God gave his beloved Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but should have everlasting life," it was a most solemn declaration from Him who is most just and true, that the whole world deserved to perish. And herein is love, that for such a world God had provided such a Redeemer.

That unassisted reason would discover that the transgressor of God's law is worthy of eternal death, I will not affirm; but most certainly it cannot establish the contrary. The measure of the penalty, due for the breach of any law, must be determined by the importance of the government whose law is broken, and the magnitude of the interests involved. The punishment incurred by transgressing the law of the State is more severe than is inflicted by transgressing the law of the family, or school, because the interests of the State are more extended and important. But the divine go-

vernment embraces a far wider domain than is that of the State, and is the guardian of interests incalculably greater. Those interests are are absolutely immeasurable, and no one can prove that the eternal destruction of him who rebels against the authority of the sovereign of the universe, is more than is demanded by the enormity of his offence, or that God could have annexed to the violation of his law a less penalty, without being unfaithful to the interests of his kingdom. As we honor an earthly ruler, in proportion as he is faithful to the trust committed to him, and shrinks not from performing any duty, so let us feel that God is worthy of our reverence and gratitude for annexing to his law an appropriate penalty, and for executing that penalty without mitigation, in every instance, in which his own glory and the good of his great kingdom require it.

As to the fact of an endless retribution of evil—let it be admitted that the wicked deserve to suffer, and must and will suffer, while they continue to sin, who could with confidence predict that they will continue sinning for ever and sufferiug forever?

However we may speculate and reason upon the subject, the word of God will stand, and his purposes will be accomplished. "He is a God of truth, and without iniquity; righteous in all his ways, and holy in all his works." In his decisions we may and should repose implicit confidence. Since hath declared that eternal death is the wages of sin, ill would it become us to say, that our offences do not merit a sentence so severe.

Having established, as I Conceive, the true interpretation of the text, I would now call your attrention to some inferences from it.

1. We infer the extreme turpitude and malignity of sin. The mind of God is not perverted by any improper partialities or corrupt inclinations. With him there is no darkness nor error. He is a God of knowledge, and by him actions are weighed in an unerring balance. But he has pronounced the wages of sin to be death, even that death of the soul, from which there is no resurrection—a death which must terminate, not existence, but enjoyment—a death of comfort, virtue, and hope. How inexpressibly malignant must that be which merits in the divine judgment so great a doom. When the Lord expelled our first parents from the garden of Eden, cursing the ground for their sake, and making them liable to sorrow, sickness, and death; when he consumed with fire the cities of the plain; When he commissisned his people Israel to extirpate the Canaanites with the edge of their sword; when at various periods he visited the Jews with desolating judgments, and at length destroyed their na-

tional existence, and scattered them among all nations, to be everywhere persecuted and trampled upon; when he smote with instant death Ananias and Sapphira for uttering a falsehood; when he denied Moses, his servant, the privilege so earnestly desired, of entering the land of promise, because he had spoken unadvisedly with his lips; in all these instances something may be seen of that displeasure, with which a righteous God beholds the workers of iniquity. But when we hear the law proclaiming the soul that sinneth it shall die, the wages of sin is death; when we see the wicked cast into the lake of fire, and the smoke of their torment ascending up forever and ever; then we are most emphatically taught, that it is "an evil thing and a bitter" to disobey God. He views every object as it is. If sin is that "abominable thing" which he hateth, it is "exceedingly sinful;" if he is "angry with the wicked every day," there is good reason for this displeasure; if he has threatened to "punish them with everlasting destruction," this is the portion, which they justly deserve.

2. If endless misery is the wages of sin, this is the doom, which might in perfect justice be passed and executed upon us all. "There is not a just man upon earth who doeth good and sinneth not." "If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us." "The whole world has become guilty before God." What though you have not been guilty of crimes against the peace and welfare of the community? The law of God doth not say, the robber, the incendiary, the murderer, but "the soul that sinneth, it shall die"—"cursed is every one who continueth not in all things, which God hath commanded them to do." The malignity of sin does not consist chiefly in this, that it is a violation of human laws, and injurious to human beings. It is rebellion against the most high God; it is a violation of those sacred obligations, by which we are bound to love and serve our Creator; it is opposed to the laws of his government; it purposes, to obscure his glory, to spread discord and ruin through his empire. In these respects all sins agree. Some offences, doubtless, are more heinous than others: and some offenders deserve a punishment, peculiarly severe. But all sin is committed against God; and every transgressor of his law deserves death.

As intelligent, accountable beings, all men are under law: and none can be justified by an obedience, which none have rendered. "By the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight; for by the law is the knowledge of sin," and that death, which is the wages of sin. But if none are justified by the law, all are condemned by it; and if our future condition is to be decided by our conformity, or want of conformity to that perfect rule, there is no hope; and "no-

thing remains but a fearful looking for of judgement and fiery indignation."

On no subject are we in greater danger of entertaining lax and erroneous opinions, than of our own sinfulness and ill desert. And yet on no subject is it more important, that our views should be in agreement with "the true sayings of God." "Judgement has come upon all men to condemnation." We are included. Let us understand this, and be suitably affected by it. It will not be conducive to the cure of our spiritual diseases, to deny their existence; it will not open our prison doors, to imagine that we are free; it will not secure an interest in the great salvation, to believe that we do not need it. Let the truth come home to our hearts—that we have broken, in instances innumerable, the good law of our Maker; that we are righteously condemned by it; and that if sovereign mercy do not interpose for our deliverance, we are lost, irrecoverably, to God, and holiness, and heaven. Well does it become us to lie low before the eternal Majesty, and with a humble, broken spirit, each one of us to cry, "God be merciful to me a sinner!"

3. If sin deserves endless misery, how wonderful is that grace which bringeth salvation. God spared not his own Son, but freely gave him up; the Son came down from heaven, assumed our nature, became a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief, endured the contradiction of sinners, hid not his face from shame and spitting, and went as a lamb to the slaughter; for whom? For convicted criminals, condemned by a righteous sentence to eternal death. "God hath commended his love to us, in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us." Consider, too, what blessings Christ died to procure; not alleviation of future sufferings; not merely entire deliverance from them; but, in addition to this, "a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." "The wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord." Were there any thing incredible in our religion it would be this—that to beings so guilty the High and Holy One has been so condescending and gracious. But we will not cavil and object; we will humbly and thankfully adore the wisdom, whose counsels are a great deep; "the unsearchable riches" of infinite grace; "the love that passeth knowledge."

4. If sin deserves endless punishment, all arguments against the infliction of it, derived from the justice and goodness of God, must be inconclusive. That no such inference can with propriety be drawn from the justice of God, is perfectly obvious. I cannot be unjust to inflict deserved punishment Dr. Chauncy has acknowledged that, if "the next state is a state of punishment, not intended for the cure of the patients themselves, but to satisfy the justice of God, and give

warning to others, it is impossible that all men should finally be saved."

But if endless punishment is consistent with the justice of God, it cannot be proved irreconcilable with his goodness. The great object of divine benevolence is the good of the universe. The happines of individuals is sought in subordination to this. When the good of an individual would be inconsistent with the general good, the benevolence of God will induce him to sacrifice the former to the latter. How then can *we* decide, what measures the goodness of God will lead him to adopt with respect to the guilty? That he will never do injustice we know; that he will always be infinitely benevolent, we cannot doubt. But how far his benevolence will lead him to confer undeserved favors, we cannot determine; because, with our limited views, we cannot know, whether the communication of such benefits in any given instance would be friendly, or injurious, to the great interests of his kingdom.

Let it be supposed, that under the government of some earthly monarch, distinguished for his justice and benevolence, certain persons have been legally arraigned, and after a fair trial convicted of deeds worthy of death; could it with certainty be inferred, from the benevolence of the monarch, that the sentence of the violated law would not be executed? Should any one, unacquainted with the state of the country, and incapable of foreseeing the influence upon community, of punishment on the one hand and of pardon on the other, confidently assert, that the execution of the criminal would be inconsistent with the monarch's goodness, might he not be justly charged with presumptuously intermeddling with things too high for him? How then can we venture to affirm, that the goodness of God will not permit the righteous penalty of his law to be fulfilled? How do we know, that the just punishment of transgressors cannot advance the general good? That the happiness of God's kingdom cannot be promoted more effectually by destroying its enemies, than by sparing them? Unless we can prove that this is impossible, no arguments in favor of universal salvation, derived from the Divine benevelence, will be of any avail.

It is not uncommon for those, who would infer the final happiness of all from the goodness of God, to appeal to our feelings. "Have not you a desire," they say, "that all should be finally happy, and is God less benevolent than you are? He is the Father of his creatures; and would a father consign his children to everlasting burnings?" Of one who thus reasons, I would inquire, does it give you pleasure to observe the pains and sorrows of your fellow-men in this world? Had you the power, should you possess the inclination, to bring upon them those evils, by which they are now

afflicted? Would you send abroad "the pestilence that walketh in darkness, and the destruction that wasteth at noon-day?" Would you permit the blood-thirsty pirate and the cruel slaveholder to live and prosper? Would you torture your infant child with excruciating pain? Would you deprive a beloved son of his reason, or reduce him to beggary? Yet these things do occur under the government of God; and if the afflictions of this life are not inconsistent with his benevolence, it is impossible to show, that those of a future state will be, even though they should continue through endless ages.

What will be the condition of human beings hereafter, he can tell us, who "brought life and immortality to light." It is not our province to decide, what measures the perfections of God require him to adopt. His ways are above our ways, his thoughts are higher than our thoughts. Whatever he has been pleased to reveal, it becomes us, with a humble, teachable spirit, to receive.

5. If the sinner deserves endless punishment, this will be his portion. "Wo to the wicked! it shall go ill with him; for the reward of his hands shall be given him," ISA. iii. 11. He shall receive the punishment which he deserves, and which God has threatened to inflict. "He shall have judgment without mercy, who had showed no mercy," JAMES ii. 13. "If any man worship the beast and his image, the same shall drink the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation," REV. xiv. 9, 10. To have judgement without mercy, and drink of the wrath of God without mixture, plainly signify to be punished to the full extent of what justice demands, to suffer all that one deserves When our Savior had concluded the parable of the servant, who owed his master 10,000 talents, he made (MARK xviii. 35,) the following application: "So likewise shall my heavenly father do also unto you, if ye, from your hearts, forgive not every one his brother their trespasses"—i. e. he shall treat you, as the king treated his wicked, cruel servant. How that was, he had just told them. "And his lord was wroth and delivered him to the tormentors, till he should pay all that was due unto him." Those persons, therefore, who do not possess a forgiving spirit, are to be punished for their sins, until they shall have suffered all which they deserve, and the claims of justice are fully satisfied. But that period will never arrive. When ages of suffering shall have passed away, a debt will still remain, which future ages of suffering will not be able to discharge.

The argument is this. The sinner deserves endless punishment. The scriptures plainly testify that he will suffer, continuing impenitent until the close of life, all which he deserves. He will suffer, then, endless punishment. Not only

is death his wages, but death is the end of the path, in which he is now travelling. "Oh, wicked man, thou shalt surely die." "As righteousness tendeth to life, so he that pursueth evil, pursueth it to his own death." "As I live," saith the Lord, "I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live. Turn ye, turn ye, from your evil ways; for why will ye die?" Why this affecting expostulation, this earnest entreaty, if it were not a principle, as immovably fixed, as is the throne of the Eternal, that if the sinner turn not, he must and will die? Die not merely the death of the body—this he would not avoid by turning—from this repentance would not save him—but that second death beyond the grave, the ever-enduring death of the soul.

It is true, that Jesus Christ has died a "propitiation for our sins;" and the promise is sure, that the penitent shall be forgiven, the believer shall be saved. God hath told us, that he would have "all men come to the knowledge of the truth and be saved;" and all are most urgently invited to turn and live. But how shall he be redeemed from the curse of the law, who does not receive Christ, and secure, upon the terms proposed, forgiveness through his blood? What other name is given among men, whereby they may be saved? The blessings of salvation are not promised to all indiscriminately. How can they be saved from sin, who persist in the love and practice of sin? To the unbelieving and disobedient, Christ himself, is a "stone of stumbling and a rock of offence." Vengeance will come upon them for not obeying the Gospel. Simply to "neglect so great salvation" certain ruin.

Let us all be persuaded to lay these things to heart. We all have been the abject slaves of sin; and if not made free by the regenerating Spirit, we are in bondage still. Bondage indeed it is. "The way of transgressors is hard;" and it leads on to death. No one ever hardened himself against God and prospered. Against this glorious Being we have rebelled; by serving sin we have waged war with God. Persevering in this warfare, our recompense will be death; not the dissolution of the body, not the extinction of being, but that final separation from all that is holy and blessed; that hopeless abandonment to all that is evil and tormenting; that unutterable anguish of a mind in perpetual conflict with itself and with God, which constitute most truly the death of the soul; a death to be endured, not for a few years, not for a single century, not for thousands of ages, but for eternity. How long does a single night appear, which is spent in constant, excruciating pain. Minutes seem hours, and hours ages. Think of the situation of him who is languishing under an incurable disease, occasioned by his own folly, tortured with incessant agony, and hopeless of

relief. Behold him suffering, day after day, the tortures of an aching body and an upbraiding conscience. Hear him cry out "in the morning, would God it were evening; and in the evening, would God it were morning. When I lie down I say, when shall I rise and the night be gone; and I am full of tossings to and fro until the dawning of the day. The arrows of the Almighty are within me, the poison whereof drinketh up my spirit. The terrors of God do set themselves in array against me." To spend one's life, to linger fifty, seventy, or eighty years in such misery, how insupportable the idea! What if life were lengthened to the age of the Antediluvians. How terrible to pass a thousand years in constant suffering, like that of the living body in the midst of burning flame! But what are a thousand years in comparison with eternity? Infinitely less than a drop in the ocean.

Needless alarm, causeless disquietude, I have no wish to produce. But I do beseech you to consider, what God has been pleased to reveal of the future and eternal condition of impenitent men. If you saw a fellow creature, carelessly slumbering on the brink of a precipice, would you not endeavor to save him? If your neighbor's house were on fire, and he were in imminent dange of being consumed, would you not sound the alarm? And shall not he, who beholds the sinner slumbering on the verge of perdition, warn him of his danger? Shall he be censured for preaching terror, and for attempting unduly to move the passions of his hearers, who tells them, in the language of inspiration, the end of these things is death, they shall be tormented day and night forever and ever?

If, unpardoned sin will be punished with eternal death, it is the extreme of presumptuous folly to delay repentance. The pleasures of sin are but for a season; the pains resulting from it will never cease. But they who believing in Christ take up their cross and follow him, though in this world they may have tribulation, will not be left comfortless, and in the world to come will inherit life everlasting.

Ye, who love not the Lord Jesus Christ, and are not careful to obey his commands, the day is at hand, when "the King will come in his glory, and will reward every man according to his works." Will it then give you pleasure, that you have spent the season of your probation in minding earthly things, and slighting the Friend who died to redeem you? At present you may believe, that your sins are few and of small magnitude; and that if you maintain a fair reputation among men, it is not indispensable, that you should walk humbly with God, set your affections on things above, and live the life of faith in a crucified risen Redeemer.

You hope that a liberal allowance will be made for human infirmity; and that the merit of your virtues will atone for your frailties and imperfections. But what saith the Scripture? "Whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all."—"God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil." The wages of sin, of all sin, of every sin, is death. The soul that sinneth, it shall die. The sins and deficiencies of the penitent and believing will indeed be forgiven; for "there is no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus." But you are not Christ's. Not being renewed and sanctified by the Spirit of Christ, you are none of his. You have not passed from death unto life. You are under the curse, as transgressors of the law, as rejecters of the Gospel; and whether you are more or less guilty, than some others, with whom you may compare yourselves, the wrath of God abideth on you, and for you is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever.

Do you refuse to take warning? Living as you now live, with the heart that you now have, will you still indulge the hope, that your end will be everlasting life? Take heed, that you proceed upon sure ground, that you build your hope upon a stable foundation; expose not your own souls to the peril of eternal death; for "what is man advantaged, if he gain the whole world, and lose himself, or be cast away?" Soon will your eternal doom be decided at that dreadful tribunal from which there is no appeal.

PREPARE TO MEET THY GOD.

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SERMON CCCCXI.

MORAL USES OF THE SEA,

DELIVERED ON BOARD THE PACKET SHIP VICTORIA, CAPT. MORGAN, AT SEA, JULY, 1845.

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Genesis i. 10.—"And God called the dry land Earth: and the gathering together of the waters called he Seas: And God saw that it was good.

Not a few have wondered why God, in creating a world for the habitation of man, should have chosen to hide three-fourths of its surface under a waste of waters. Doubtless it had been as easy for him to have made it a good round ball of meadow and ploughland. The field where leviathan plays might as well have been given to the reaper: the fickle domain of waters might as well have been erected into a firm continent of land, and covered with flourishing and populous empires. Why, then, asks the inquisitive thought of man, why so great waste in the works of God? why has He ordained these great oceans, and set the habitable parts of the world thus islanded between them? why spread out these vast regions of waste, to suppress the fruitfulness and stint the populousness of his realm?

That He has done it we know. We also know his opinion of the arrangement—God saw that it was good. This should be enough to check all presumptuous judgments and over curious questions: God has done it, and in His view it is good.

Still, if our object be not to judge God, but to instruct ourselves, the whole field is open, and we may inquire at pleasure. And now that we are out upon this field of waters, cut off from the society of man, and from all the works of God, save the waters themselves, it cannot be inappropriate to inquire, What is the meaning

* Having been requested, in the absence of the Author, to superintend the printing of this Discourse, I venture to promise the reader no ordinary gratification and delight; and to express my admiration that a performance so full of thought, and life, and beauty, should have been thrown off, at the moment, on shipboard.

THO. H. SKINNER.

October 13th, 1845.

and use of the sea? for what benificent end or object may we suppose the Almighty Creator to have ordained its existence?

Were this question put by the natural philosopher, he would proceed at once to show that the sea tempers the climate of the land, making the heat less intense and the cold less rigorous; that the sea is a great store-house of provisions in itself, and also of waters for the land, without which even that were unfruitful; and many other things of a like nature, all of which may be true, and yet it cannot be said, with any confidence, that God could not have tempered the climate of the land as well, and made it as fruitful, without the sea.

It is only when we look at the *moral uses* of the world, its uses in the discipline of mind and character, where the free will of man, if it is to be preserved in its freedom, requires that God should condescend to particular means and expedients—it is only here that we seem to grasp those imperative and momentous reasons which can be said, with most confidence, to have determined God's arrangement in the matter we are considering. Indeed, there is a kind of impropriety in considering physical ends or causes as being, in any case, the final causes of God's works; for to God there is, in strict reason, no final cause but virtue or moral good. To this all things are subordinate; for this all things are done. When we say that the world was made for the habitation of man, we do not mean, if we rightly understand ourselves, that it is made to contain as many men as possible, in as much of plenty and ease as possible. In that case, most manifestly, God should have made as many acres of good productive land as possible; nay, He should have made the earth as large as possible. Having it for his problem to raise the most numerous possible herd of men, He has only to enlarge his pasture. For the same reason, too, there should be no rigors of heat or of frost, no deserts, whether of sand or snow, no tempests, no fruitless seasons. Most manifestly the world is made to be the habitation of man, in some other and far different sense. Rather is it built to bless him as a moral creature, so ordered and fitted up that it shall most powerfully conduce to make him truly a man, a creature of intelligence, society, love and duty. Having this for his design, He has rather sought to limit than to extend the number of our race; for a school of virtue, you will observe, may be too large, as well as too easy, for the benefit of the pupil. Therefore, He gives us a small globe to inhabit, narrows down our field still farther by rigors of perpetual frost, and barren mountains, and oceans of water—all that He may bring us into compass and compression, and set us under the holy discipline of danger, toil and hardship; for these are the best, the only sufficient instruments of knowledge and character. To such a being as man, virtue can only be a conquest.

Prepared by views like these, let us go on to ask, *What are the*

moral uses of the sea? wherein does it appear to have been added for the moral benefit of the world?

I think it will appear, as we prosecute this inquiry, that the ordinance of the sea is so thoroughly interwoven with all that is of the highest interest to man—the progress of society, art, government, science and religion—in a word, all that is included in moral advancement—that, without the sea, the world could not be considered a fit habitation for man. Nor will it be difficult for you, I trust, to believe that when the Almighty smiled upon the waters and the land, and pronounced them good, He had some especial reference to the moral benefit of that being whose residence He was preparing.

One great problem of God, in building a school for man, was, how to distribute the school; for it is manifest that no one government, or society, could fill and occupy the whole domain—certainly not, without producing indefinite confusion and oppression, and sacrificing many of the most powerful stimulants to energy and advancement of every sort. Neither could it be done, without exalting the throne or governing power to such a pitch of eminence as would probably attract the religious homage of mankind, and set it at the head of a universal Lamaism. But if the world is to be distributed into nations, or kingdoms, which are likely to be always jealous of each other and sometimes hostile, they need to be separated by natural barriers, such as will prevent strife by circling them within definite boundaries, and, when they are in actual strife, will fortify them against destruction one from the other. This is effected, in part, by interposing mountains and rivers, but more effectually, and on a larger scale, by spreading seas and oceans between them. These great bodies of water can be passed more easily for purposes of convenience than for those of destruction. Indeed, it is impossible for whole nations to pour across them for purposes of invasion, as across a mere geographical line. Nature is here the grand distributor and fortifier of nations. She draws her circle of waters, not around some castle or fortified citidal of art, but around whole nations themselves. Then it is within these fortified circles of nature, that nations are to unfold their power and have their advancement. Such was Greece, cut off from all the world by boundaries of rock and water, which no Xerxes with his invading army could effectually pass; having, at the same time, enough of strife and struggle within to keep her on the alert and waken all her powers to vigorous exercise. Such is England now. England, for so many ages past the foremost light of Europe, the bulwark of law, the great temple of religion, could never have been what it is, or anything but the skirt of some nation comparatively undistinguished, had not the Almighty drawn his circle of waters around it, and girded it with strength, to be the right hand of his power. It is the boundaries of nations, too, that give them locality

and settle those historic associations which are the conscious life of society and the source of all great and high emotions; otherwise they fly to perpetual vagrancy and dissipation—there is no settlement, no sense of place or compression, and, as nothing takes root, nothing grows. Thus the ancient Scythian, roaming over the vast levels of the north, is succeeded by the modern Tartar; both equally wild and uncultivated—the father of three thousand years ago and the son of to-day.

Again it will be found that the oceans and seas have sometimes contributed, beyond all power of estimation, to the moral and social advancement of the race, by separating one part of the world even from the knowledge of another, and preserving it for discovery and occupation at an advanced period of history. Had the territory of the United States been conjoined to the eastern shore of Asia, or the western of Europe, or had there been no oceans interposed to break the continuous circle of land, it is obvious that the old and worn-out forms of civilization would have wanted a spur to reform and improvement that is now supplied. When, at length, the New World was discovered, then was man called out, as it were, to begin again. The trammels of ancient society and custom, which no mere human power could burst, were burst by the fiat of Providence, and man went forth to try his fortunes once more, carrying with him all the advantages of a previous experience. I set up for the United States no invidious claim of precedence. We acknowledge our rawness and obscurity, in comparison with the splendor and high refinement of more ancient nations. We only claim it as our good fortune that we are a new nation, peopled by men of a new world, who had new principles to be tested, for the common benefit of mankind. As such the eye of the world is upon us, and has been for many years. The great thought of our institutions—the happiness and elevation of the individual man—is gradually and silently working its way into all the old fabrics of legitimacy in Christendom, and compelling the homage of power in all its high places. Whatever motion there has been in European affairs for the last half century—all the mitigations of law, the dynasties subverted, the constitutions conceded, the enlarged liberty of conscience and the press, popular education—everything that goes to make society benificent—has been instigated, more or less directly, by the great idea that is embodied and represented in the institutions of the United States. This same great idea, the well-being and character of the individual man, has been brought forth, too, to offer itself to the world, just at the right time. Without it, we may well doubt whether the institutions of Europe had not come to their limit, beyond which they had not, in themselves, any power of advancement. Had it come earlier, Europe was not ready for it. The immense advantage that is thus to accrue to mankind, as regards the great interests of truth, society and religious virtue, from the

fact that our Western Hemisphere was kept hidden for so many ages, beyond an impassible ocean, to be opened, in due time, for the planting and propagation of new ideas, otherwise destined to perish, no mind can estimate. Nor is this process of planting yet exhausted.—There are islands in the Southern Oceans larger than England, that are yet to become seats of power and of empire, and possibly to shine as lights of Antartic history eclipsing those of the north; or, if not eclipsing, giving to all the northern climes, both of the Eastern and Western Worlds, the experiment of new principles, needful to their progress and happiness.

But it is another and yet more impressive view of the moral utility of seas and oceans, that, while they have a disconnecting power operating in the ways first specified, they have at the same time a connecting power, bringing all regions and climes into correspondence and commercial interchange. Fortified by oceans and seas against injury from each other, they are yet united by the same for purposes of mutual benefit. Were there no seas, were the globe covered by a continuous sheet of land, how different the history of the past from what it has been! how different the moral and intellectual state of human society from what it now is! There being no medium of commerce, save that of land travel, no intercourse could exist between nations remote from each other. They would know each other only by a kind of tradition, as now we know the past. Tradition, too, in its long and uncertain transit across the longitude of the world, would clothe itself in fable, and we, instead of being made to feel the common brotherhood of man as now, should probably be fast in the belief that the opposite hemisphere of the world is peopled by giants, Centaurs, Anthropophagi, and such-like fabulous monsters. There would, of course, be no commerce, except between nations that are adjacent; and society, being life without motion or stimulus, would rot itself down into irredeemable bigotry and decrepitude. God would not have it so. On the ocean, which is the broad public highway of the Almighty, nations pass and repass, visit and revisit each other, and those which are remote as freely as those which are near. And it is this fluid element that gives fluidity and progress to the institutions and opinions of the race. It is only in the great inland regions of the world, as in Central Africa and Asia, that bigotry and inveterate custom have their seat. In these vast regions that never saw the sea, regions remote from the visits of commerce and the moving world, men have lived from age to age without progress, or the idea of progress, crushed under their despotisms, held fast in the chains of indomitable superstition, rooted down like their trees, and motionless as their mountains. In the mean time, the shores and islands of the world have felt the pulse of human society, and yielded themselves to progress. It is, in a word, this fluid sea, on whose bosom the free winds of heaven are wafting us to-day, which represents all mobility

and progress in the human race. Without this interposed, the rock-based continents themselves were not more fixed than the habits and opinions of mankind. On the other hand, you will observe that the prejudices of men who live upon and by the waters are never invincible. They admit of change, somewhat by habit and association, as their element changes, and they shift their sail to the winds. Hence it was, in part, may we not believe, that our Saviour began his mission on the shores of Gennesaret, and among the boatmen there. Out of these, too, he chose his apostles, because they had the ductility requisite to receive new truths and new opinions of duty. Among them he had few prejudices to encounter, while at Jerusalem every mind was set against him with obstinacy as firm as the rocks of Zion. So it was never a Babylon, or a Timbuctoo, or any city of the inland regions, that was forward to change and improvement. But it was a Tyre, queen of the sea; a Carthage, sending out her ships, beyond the Pillars of Hercules, to Britain and the Northern Isles: an Athens, an Alexandria—these were the seats of art, and thought, and learning, and liberal improvement of every sort. So, too, it was the Italian commercial cities that broke up the dark ages, and gave the modern nations that impulse which set them forward in their career of art and social refinement, and, remotely speaking, of liberty.

The spirit of commerce, too, is the spirit of peace, its interest the interest of peace, and peace is the element of all moral progress, as war is the element of all barbarism and desolation. Every ship that sails the ocean is a pledge for peace to the extent of its value—every sail a more appropriate symbol of peace than the olive-branch itself. Commerce, too, has at length changed the relative position of nations. Once upon a footing of barbarism, they are now placed on a footing of friendship and civilization. In the most splendid days of Athens, piracy was a trade, not a crime; for it was the opinion that nations are naturally hostile, and will, of course, prey upon each other. But now, at length, commerce has created for itself a great system of international and commercial law, which, to a certain extent, makes one empire of all the nations, maintaining the rights of person and property, when abroad upon the ocean, or in other lands, as carefully and efficiently as if there were but one nation or people on the globe. Search the history of man, from the beginning till now, you will find among all the arts, inventions and institutions of the race, no one so beneficent, none that reveals so broad a stride of progress, as this. And it promises yet to go on, extending its sway, till it has given rules to all the conduct of nations, provided redress for all injuries, and thus lawed out forever all war from the earth.

The nations engaged in commerce will, of course, be the most forward nations. In perpetual intercourse with each other, they will ever be adopting the inventions, copying the good institutions,

and rectifying the opinions, one of another; for the man of commerce is never a bigot. He goes to buy in other nations, commodities that are wanted in his own. He is therefore in the habit of valuing what is valuable in other countries, and so, proportionally, are the people or nation that consumes the commodities of other countries. And so much is there in this, that the government, the literature, nay, even the religion of every civilized nation must receive a modifying influence from all the nations with whom it maintains an active commerce. In opinions, literature, arts, laws—nay, in everything—they must gradually approximate, till they coalesce, at last, in one and the same catholic standard of value and excellence. Commerce is itself catholic, and it seems to be the sublime purpose of God, in its appointment, to make everything else so, that, as all are of one blood, so, at last, they shall be one conscious brotherhood.

In the mean time, the nations most forward in art and civilization are approaching, by the almost omnipresent commerce they maintain, all the rude and barbarous nations of the world, carrying with them, wherever they go, all those signs of precedence by which these nations may be impressed with a sense of their backwardness, and set forward in a career of improvement. They need only be visited by the ships, or especially the steam-vessels, of European commerce, to see that they are in their childhood, and there must remain, except as they adopt the science and the institutions of European nations. What, consequently, do we behold? Not the wilds of Northern Russia only, not the islands only of the sea, becoming members of European laws, arts and manners—but the throne of Siam inquiring after the methods and truths of the West; all British India studying English, in a sense more real than the study of words; Muscat sending over to examine and copy our arts; both branches of the Mohammedan empire receiving freely, and carefully protecting, Christian travellers, and adopting, as fast as they can, the European modes of war and customs of society; China beginning to doubt whether she is indeed the Celestial Empire, and doomed, ere twenty years are gone by, to be as emulous of what is European as Egypt or Turkey now is. All this by the power of commerce. They feel our shadow cast on their weakness, and their hearts sink within them, as if they had seen a people taller than they. For the same reason, too, the false gods are trembling in their seats the world over, and all the strongholds of spiritual delusion shaking to the fall. The sails of commerce are the wings of truth. Wherever it goes (and where does it not?) the power of science, and of all that belongs to cultivated manhood, is felt. The universal air becomes filled with new ideas, and man looks out from the prison of darkness in which he has been lying, chained and blinded, sees a dawn arising on the hills, and feels the morning-breath of truth and liberty.

What I have said, thus far, is not so distinctively religious as some might expect in a Christian discourse. But you will observe that all which I have said, in this general way, of human advancement, as connected with the race of the sea, involves religious advancement, both as regards knowledge and character. All the advancement, too, of which I have spoken, is, in one view, the work of Christianity: for this it is which has given to Christendom its precedence. And it is precisely the office of the Christian faith that it shall thus elevate and bless mankind—bless them, not in their devotions only, not in their sacraments, or in passing to other worlds, but in everything that constitutes their mortal life—in society, art, science, wealth, government—all that adorns, elevates, fortifies, and purifies their being. You will also perceive that the very tone of Christian piety itself, especially where it is not tempered, as in the United States, by the presence and toleration of all varieties of faith and worship, needs to be modulated and softened by the influence of a general intercourse with mankind: for such is the narrowness of man, that even the love of Christ itself is in perpetual danger of dwindling to a mere bigot prejudice in the soul: mistaking its mere forms for substance: becoming less generous in its breadth the more intense it is in degree: and even measuring out the judgment of the world by the thimble in which its own volume and dimensions are cast. The piety of the Church can never attain to its proper power and beauty till it has become thoroughly catholic in its spirit; a result which is to be continually favored and assisted by the influence of a catholic commerce. I do, indeed, anticipate a day for man, when commerce itself shall become religious, and religion commercial; when the holy and the useful shall be blended in a common life of brotherhood and duty, comprising all the human kindred of the globe.

Such an expectation, too, is the more reasonable, when you consider that commerce is so manifestly showing herself to be the handmaid of religion, by opening, as I just now said, the way for the universal spread of Christianity. It quells the prejudices of the nations, and shames away all confidence in their gods and institutions, and then the Church of God, as the ground is cleared, or being cleared, comes in to fill the chasm that is made, by offering a better faith. What, then, do we see, but that the ocean is becoming the pathway of the Lord? He is visiting the nations, and they shake before him! The islands give up first—the continents must follow! One thing is always sure—either commerce must fold up its sails, and the ocean dry up in its bed, (which few will expect,) or else every form of idolatry and barbarous worship must cease from the world. This I say apart from all the Christian effects and instrumentalities supplied by missions; for these are as yet insignificant, compared with those mighty workings of Providence whose path is in the sea. But if these precede, those must follow.

As man is a religious being, God will never undertake to rob him of a false religion without giving him a better. Neither can any Christian mind contemplate the rapid and powerful changes which in our day, have been wrought in the practical position of the heathen nations, without believing that some great design of Providence is on foot, that promises the universal spread of the Christian faith and the spiritual redemption of all the races of mankind. "Lift up thine eyes around about and see, all they gather themselves together they come unto thee! The abundance of the sea shall be converted unto thee, the forces of the Gentiles shall come unto thee!"

The sea has yet another kind of moral and religious use, which is more direct and immediate. The liquid acres of the deep, tossing themselves evermore to the winds, and rolling their mighty anthem round the world, may be even the most valuable and productive acres God has made. Great emotions and devout affections are better fruits than corn, more precious luxuries than wine or oil. And God has built the world with a visible aim to exercise his creature with whatever is lofty in conception, holy in feeling, and filial in purpose towards himself. All the trials and storms of the land have this same object. To make the soul great, He gives us great dangers to meet, great obstacles to conquer. Deserts, famines, pestilences, walking in darkness, regions of cold and wintry snow, hail and tempest—none of these are in his view, elements of waste and destruction, because they go to fructify the moral man. As related to the moral kingdom of God, they are engines of truth, purity, strength, and all that is great and holy in character. The sea is a productive element of the same class. What man that has ever been upon the deep has not felt his nothingness, and been humbled, for the time at least, of his pride? How many have received lessons of patience from the sea? How many here have bowed, who never bowed before, to the tremendous sovereignty of God? How many prayers, otherwise silent, have gone up, to fill the sky and circle the world, from wives and mothers, imploring his protecting presence with the husbands and sons they have trusted to the deep? It is of the greatest consequence, too, that such a being as God should have images prepared to express Him and set Him before the mind of man in all the grandeur of his attributes. These He has provided in the heavens and the sea, which are two great images of his vastness and power; the one, remote, addressing itself to cultivated reason and science—the other, nigh, to mere sense, and physically efficient, a liquid symbol of the infinitude of God. We are ourselves, upon it resting in peace or quailing with dread, as if wafted by his goodness, or tossed by the tremendous billows of his will. It is remarkable, too, how many of the best and most powerful images of God in the Scriptures are borrowed from he sea. "Canst thou by searching find out God? The measur

thereof is longer than the earth, and broader than the sea."—"Thy judgments are a great deep."—"Who shut up the sea with doors? I made the cloud the garment thereof, and brake up for it my decreed place, and set bars and doors, and said, hitherto shalt thou come and no further, and here shall thy proud waves be stayed." "Which alone spreadeth out the heavens and treadeth upon the waves of the sea."—"Thy way is in the sea, and thy path in the great waters." "The waters saw thee, O Lord, the waters saw thee; they were afraid, the depths also were troubled!" Every kind of vastness—immensity, infinity, eternity, mystery, omnipotence—has its type in the sea, and there is much more of God in the world, for man to see and feel, as the sea can express, and as much more of worship and piety as there is of God.

Doubtless we have all been happy in the pleasant society and lively scenes that have thus far distinguished our voyage. Have you seen the Almighty, too, in his path upon the waters? Have you felt his power, blessed yourself in the grandeur of his mystery, leaned upon the majesty of his purposes with a more feeling and filial devotion? The heart that finds no God upon the sea, and delights not there to feel the waves of emotion from his presence roll over it, may go where it will in quest of the pitiful and shallow pleasures appropriate to its capacity, but it has no room for God, or it would seem, for anything great or holy.

Doubtless it will occur to some of you, that the moral and religious character of the seafaring race does not favor the view I have taken of the benefits accruing to mankind from the sea. This however, is rather the fault of the land than of the water. It is on land, that the vices of the sea have their cause and sustenance. There is not a more open, fine-spirited race of beings on earth than sailors. But when they reach the land, they are too much neglected by the good, and always surrounded by the wicked, who hasten to make them their prey. Latterly, more has been attempted for their benefit, and the results accomplished are such as cannot but surprise us. Far enough are they from hopelessness, if so great a change can be wrought in so short a time, by means so limited. Indeed, I might urge it as one of the best proofs of the mitigating and softening influence of the sea, that no dejected race of landsmen could ever have been made to show the effects of Christian effort and kindness so speedily, or by so many and fine examples of Christian character. And I fully believe that the time is at hand when all that pertains to commerce is to be sanctified by virtue and religion, as of right it should be; when the mariners will be blended with all the other worshippers on shore, in the exercise of common privileges, and as members of a common brotherhood; when the ships will have their Sabbath, and become temples of praise on the deep; when habits of temperance, and banks for saving, will secure them in thrift, and assist to give them character when they

will no more live an unconnected, isolated, and therefore reckless life, but will have their wives and children vested here and there, in some neat cottage among the hills, to be to them, when abroad, the anchor of their affections and the security of their virtue; when they will go forth, also, to distant climes and barbarous shores, with all their noble and generous traits sanctified by religion, to represent the beauty of Christ to men, and become examples of all that is good and beneficent in his Gospel. Be it ours to aid a purpose so desirable, theirs to realize it in their conduct and character.

I cannot better conclude, than by referring to a thought suggested by my text, and illustrated by my whole course of remark, viz. this: That God made the world for salvation. Even in that earliest moment, when our orb was rising out of chaos, and reeking with the moisture of a first morning, God is seen to have been studying the moral benefit and blessing of our race. He did not make the seas too large. He laid them where they should be.—He swept their boundaries with his finger, in the right place. The floods lift up their voice, the floods lift up their waves, but they are not too furious or dangerous. The Lord on High is mightier than the noise of many waters, yea, than the mighty waves of the sea. God manages and guides this army of waters—every wave is in his purposes and rolls at his feet. He is over all as a God of Salvation, and the field He covers with his waters He makes productive. When He called the dry land earth, and the gathering together of the waters called the seas, then had He in mind the kingdom of his Son, and the glory and happiness of a race yet uncreated. He looked—He viewed it again—He saw that it was good. And the good that he saw is the good that is coming, and to come, when the sea shall have fulfilled its moral purpose, and all kindred and people that dwell upon its shores shall respond to the ever-living anthem it raises to its Author. Then let the sea roar, and the fullness thereof, the world and they that dwelt therein. Let the floods clap their hands, and the hills be joyful together before the Lord!

SERMON XXXVII.

BY REV. JACOB ABBOTT,

NEW YORK.

SUBMISSION TO THE DIVINE WILL.

"Humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time. Casting all your care upon him, for he careth for you."—1 Pet. v. 6, 7.

God enjoins upon men a spirit of submission to his will on *their* account, and on his own. In this respect he differs from human monarchs. They condemn insubordination on the part of their subjects, because it endangers their own power. The spirit of discontent and sedition among a people, perplexes cabinets, demands increased expenditures for troops and munitions of war, and awakens uneasiness in a rebellion which drives the monarch from his throne. But no murmurs of discontent, no repinings, no fruitless struggles against God can perplex his government or disturb his repose. No resistance can impede the execution of his decrees, and no rebellion ever shake the firm foundations of his throne. So that *God* enjoins upon us submission to his will for our sakes, not *for his own*. Humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, *that he may exalt you* in due time.

How useless, for a creature to attempt to resist his Creator—a *poor captive* insanely beating his head against the stone walls or iron grating of the confinement which his condition requires, or as *our Savior* expressed it in his remonstrance with Saul, an impatient *ox* who kicks against the commands of his master, and strikes only the points of the goad. Hopeless however as this resistance is, the unsubdued spirit of man, twists and turns under the mighty hand that is upon him, in the vain attempt to diminish its pressure or escape from its control. All the restless repining, all the uneasy fears, all the unavailing and useless complaints, and regrets at what is past or inevitable, are only so many struggles of a spirit in bondage, which has not learned to submit to the condition which its almighty master has thought it best for a time to impose.

Some persons confound submissiveness with tameness and inefficiency of spirit; but the truth is, on the other hand, that the true beauty and glory of submission cannot be seen in their greatest perfection except in connexion with character and conduct of the highest native energy. The Apostle Paul, who braved eve-

danger, who shrunk from no toil, whose action was in all cases most prompt and decisive, who traversed the whole known world under impulses as strong as ever moved a human soul, was, in the presence of God, a *very child*. Always self possessed and calm, he preserved a humble and docile equanimity under all circumstances of danger or of pain. In shipwreck at sea, he was quiet and unmoved while all around him was consternation; he did not seek to penetrate by eager and anxious glances the veil which concealed futurity from him. When going into extreme personal danger, in one case, he says, "and now I go bound in the spirit to Jerusalem, not knowing what shall befal me there." The meaning is that he did not *wish* to know. And harsh imprisonment, which, more than anything else, irritates and chafes common minds, and reveals their restlessness and impatience of control, was to him only a release from the obligations of duty. His mind dismisses at once all anxiety and care. He is in God's hands,—he has nothing to do, and his feelings of calm and happy submission to the divine will express themselves spontaneously in songs of praise. The spirit, so lofty and energetic in its capacities and aims, that no dangers could daunt it and no obstacles discourage, stood subdued and quiet before God. like a lion changing to a lamb when it comes into the presence of its master. Thus the spirit of submissiveness to the divine will takes its highest form when it stands in connexion with a character of the greatest energy, perseverance and decision.

The conversion of the soul is the first subduing of it to submission. Before this it rebels, secretly or openly, against God's law. It turns away from God and lives in a state of insubordination to him. When we are told this from the pulpit, in theological language, we doubt or disbelieve it. We cannot think, we say, that there is any *enmity* between us and our heavenly Father, and we invest the language of the Scriptures which so plainly asserts this, with some vague and metaphorical meaning. And yet after all, though we deny it in words, there is something in our secret consciousness which tells us it is true. In our sad and sorrowful hours when we want some refuge to go to, we cannot find such a refuge in God. The soul, desolate and wretched, finding a blank in every *earthly* direction in which it looks, sees something worse than a blank in the direction of heaven. It instinctively paints to itself the face of God darkened by a frown. While every thing looks comfortless below, it finds only a dark and gloomy dread of retribution when it attempts to look above. In a word, the unchanged soul of man has always a feeling which no reasoning can remove, that there is a vast and eternal power riding sublimely above it, under whose mighty hand it has never yet been humbled. There are times in the experience of every reflecting mind, when the world seems to shrink into insignificant dimensions and withdraw from the view. Its colors fade. Its promises of happiness disappear. Its sorrows

and woes darken the whole horizon. Its brief period of duration seems just at an end, and the heart longs to fly away in search of something to rest upon,—but is repulsed by the still gloomier aspect of every thing beyond the grave, where reigns supreme a power to which it has never yet been willing to bow. Weary at length of this wretched isolation, and touched by a sense of the divine kindness and compassion which seeks to draw us from it, we come and submit. We *humble ourselves* under the mighty hand which we feel it to be vain and wicked to resist any longer.

But he who thus conforms his will to that of God, in respect to the great question of his salvation, will often afterwards find the spirit of insubmission lingering still in his heart, and showing itself in his daily experience of the difficulties and trials of life. But we ought to submit as cheerfully and as fully to the *providence* of God as to his *law*. Instead of this, however, even the christian finds that the little losses and disappointments of life vex him—the misconduct of others irritates him. If he is in circumstances of real or imaginary danger, his mind is filled with restless and anxious solicitude, which he sometimes openly expresses and sometimes he has the good sense to conceal, but which, expressed or concealed, is wholly inconsistent with the aspiration—'Thy will be done.' Now the precept of our text covers the whole ground. It commands us to yield ourselves, wholly, and always, to the disposal of God; to give ourselves to him, to cast all our care upon him, to leave him to assume all responsibility for our protection, our welfare and our happiness,—in small things as well as great, and in great things as well as small: in sickness, in sorrow, in danger, in distress, in hope and in fear, by day and by night, at sea and on the land, *always*, *everywhere*, and under all circumstances,—with a spirit of peaceful submission which never is anxious and never disturbed.

Such is the general intent and meaning of the text.

We draw from this subject the following practical lessons:

1. We must all, at once, if we have not already done it, submit to God's *law*. He requires of us a life of penitence and faith in His Son. If we have not commenced such a life, we are engaged in that most insane and hopeless of all struggles, an attempt to resist the will of the Supreme. We stand obnoxious to a law which holds its sword of vengeance over us, and delays to strike only in hope of our submission. This law stands around us on every side, rising against us like a wall, immutable and eternal. We cannot evade it. We cannot resist it. We cannot escape its penalties. We can bow spontaneously before it now, and it will then become our protection,—or we can go on in our resistance. It is just as we please. But we cannot close our eyes to what must inevitably be the result of such a contest. If we cannot find it in our hearts to yield to its requirements, we must at last be overwhelmed with its awful retributions.

2. We must submit to God's *instructions*. We must be willing to receive what he declares to us in his word, without making captious objections to it. And, what is harder still perhaps, we must be satisfied with the imperfect light which he has thought fit to bestow. We learn from the word of God far less than our curiosity calls for, in respect to our origin, our destiny, the reasons for the proceedures of the divine government which we witness, the nature of the future world, and of the scenes and circumstances into which we shall there be ushered. We speak sometimes of the full blaze of the gospel, and it is true that the light which shines upon the path of *present duty* is clear. But the thousand topics relating to our spiritual condition and prospects, into which human curiosity and wonder strongly desire to look, receive from it a very dim and uncertain illumination. Every reflecting mind which seeks to know its future way, finds itself surrounded and enveloped with mystery which even the light of revelation refuses to dispel. The great facts of a resurrection and a judgment to come, are clearly revealed,—but the circumstances, the modes and even the possibilities of them, are shrouded in inscrutable darkness, which the mind wearies and distresses itself in vain to penetrate. The gospel is not a sun shedding a broad illumination over all it shines upon. It is a light upon a dark and dangerous coast, which shines afar, over the stormy ocean, only *penetrating* a darkness which it never was intended to dispel. The mariner can see it clearly. It guides him. It cheers him. It shows him where his port lies. But it is a mere star, after all, shining alone, showing nothing but itself, not even its own reflection in the waters. But it is enough. It is all that the pilot needs to guide him. It tells him that there is a haven there, but it leaves him who watches it and follows it, all uninformed about everything but his own course of present duty. The cities, the towns, the green fields, the thousand happy homes which spread along the shore to which it invites him, it does not reveal. All is as blank and dark in that direction as in the opposite one where rages the stormy expanse over which his ship has come. Just so with the gospel. It is a light, shining on the dark shore of eternity, just simply guiding us there. It reveals to us almost nothing of heaven, but the way to reach it. For what reason God has thus withheld from us all but the most general information respecting his designs and our future condition, we do not know. But we must submit to it. We must be willing to go on in darkness till the light shall come. We must be willing *not to know* what he has thought best not to declare, as well as to receive implicitly what he has vouchsafed to reveal.

3. We must submit to God's Providence.

We little realize how few of the circumstances of life on which our welfare and happiness depend are within our control. Man's heart deviseth his way, but the Lord directeth his steps. We

must be willing now to submit to his direction. Be active, energetic, patient, persevering and circumspect in all your plans and efforts. Leave nothing undone when it is in your power to do, to ensure success. But when you have done all, calmly and quietly leave the event in his hands who most certainly will decide, whether you have the least to acquiesce in his decision or not. Allow yourself to feel no solicitude and no anxiety. In circumstances of danger, if there you imagine there is danger, remember that restlessness and anxious concern are unbecoming. You are upon the water in a dark and stormy night,—and you harass yourself and those around you by the nothingness and expression of your fears. You watch the skies,—you make ceaseless and utterly useless enquiries,—you listen to the moaning of the wind, and wish you had not embarked,—and in a word you allow your soul to work itself into a commotion which lies within, the image and counterpart of the sea of surges which is roaring without, around you. Is this the spirit of submission? Is this a readiness to acquiesce in the divine will concerning you? Can a Christian who has given himself to the Lord to be disposed of soul and body, for time and for eternity by him, can a Christian thus allow his heart to rebel against the mighty hand that is over him, and call himself a Christian still?

Whenever anything occurs in the dealings of divine Providence, whether it be losses, dangers, or difficulties, we must say to the rising feeling within, Hush, be still. We must calm the anxiety, dismiss the care, and throw the whole soul into an attitude of quiet repose, by bringing home fully to our minds the reflection that the pressure which we feel is the pressure of the mighty hand from above, against which it is most vain as well as wicked to struggle.

So in case of any impending calamity or danger, the hand may exert itself to avert it, but the heart must be still. A reverse of fortune is involving you in difficulties and embarrassments which hedge you up, day by day, more and more closely, and from which there is every day less and less hope of extrication. Or death is coming to sunder some of the dearest ties which entwine your heart: all efforts to relieve and save are vain, and you see the sufferer, whom you love, pining slowly away and sinking gradually and hopelessly towards the grave. In either of these cases you are not indeed to relax your exertions. What little lays in your power, you must faithfully do. But the activity of your movement without must not have a counterpart in restlessness and inquietness of spirit within. Here all must be calm, peaceful, resigned. We must feel that such questions are to be decided by a different voice from ours. This willingness to leave the responsibility where it properly belongs, will take off from your soul one half its burden, and make the other half easily borne.

Some persons say that such a doctrine as this is very easy to preach but very hard to practice; but this is a mistake. It is easy and delightful to practice. It is the contrary which is hard. It is the spirit of insubmission and resistance which is hard. It is the kicking against the pricks which is hard. Whoever learns the lesson of submission to the will of God learns the secret of comfort and happiness. He enjoys everything good more, and suffers everything evil less, than another. In fact there is a kind of pleasure in receiving a cup of trial and sorrow from the hand of one whom you love and adore, when you come thoroughly to feel that he has the right to do with you just as he pleases, and that he will only please to do what is right. Many souls in this frame of mind have *welcomed* disappointment and sorrow. They open their doors to trouble and bid it come in, since it is sent from God.

The celebrated words of Kirk White are not mere poetry; they express feelings to which many hearts can respond:

"Come, Disappointment, come!
Not in thy terrors clad;
Come in thy meekest, saddest guise;
Thy chastening rod but terrifies
The restless and the bad:
But I recline
Beneath thy shrine,
And round my brow, resign'd, thy peaceful cypress twine.

Though Fancy flies away
Before thy hollow tread,
Yet Meditation, in her cell,
Hears, with faint eye, the lingering knell,
That tells her hopes are dead;
And though the tear
By chance appear,
Yet she can smile, and say, My all was not laid here.

Come, Disappointment, come!
Though from Hope's summit hurl'd,
Still, rigid Nurse, thou art forgiven,
For thou severe wert sent from heaven
To wean me from the world:
To turn my eye
From vanity,
And point to scenes of bliss that never, never die.

* * * * * *

Come, Disappointment, come!
Thou art not stern to me;
Sad Monitress! I own thy sway,
A votary sad in early day,
I bend my knee to thee.
From sun to sun
My race will run
I only bow, and say, My God, thy will be done!

This submission, however, which makes us willing to receive calmly and patiently whatever divine providence sends, does not prevent our feeling it. Some persons seem to confound resignation with insensibility, or at least they imagine that great grief shows want of resignation. But I suppose that resignation, after all, does

not tend so much to diminish the *depth*, as to change the *character* of sorrow. When we lose a friend, for example, by death or some unhappy alienation, we may *feel the loss* more or less, according to the circumstances of the case, without being resigned to it at all. On the other hand, there may be the most entire and happy acquiescence in the divine will, under the pressure of a sorrow which entirely overwhelms the soul. We must not, therefore, infer, when we see a wife overwhelmed with grief at the loss of a husband, or a mother for a son, we must not infer from the depth of the sufferer's anguish that she is not resigned. She may be perfectly so. Resignation does not turn grief into gladness. It does not weaken sensibility, or stop tears. It takes away the repining, the restlessness and the bitterness of grief,—but leaves the melting tenderness of the soul the same as before. Resignation does not destroy suffering,—it makes us willing to bear suffering. It takes away *resistance* to sorrow from the mind, not the sorrow itself. But in doing so it changes the whole character of the sorrow, not by diminishing its intensity, but by destroying its sting. It remains as great as before, but it ceases to be suffering.

We must say then to the mourner, mourn on,—but mourn, lying sweetly in the arms of divine love. Mourn on, there, and your mourning will be the joy of grief, with all its anguish and bitterness taken away.

Let us all then come at once, and acquiesce cordially and happily in the control of the mighty hand which is over us. That hand, most certainly is over us, and struggle as much as we may, we can never resist its power. We are now *where* we are, and *what* we are, not because ten years ago we planned and designed it, but because God has brought us on to our present position, in a way we knew not of. And where and what we shall be ten years hence, depends upon God's designs for us, not upon our own schemes and plans for ourselves. He will decide whether we are soon to be swallowed up in the vortices of sorrow and death which are whirling around us, or whether we shall float on a little longer. A thousand years hence we shall be where and what he pleases,—enjoying such means of happiness as he may prepare for us, or suffering the pains which his righteous retribution may provide for spirits which cannot bear his gentle sway. Let us learn soon the lesson, "Thy will be done." He who can say this always, everywhere, and under all circumstances, is safe and happy, let what will befal him. His soul is enveloped in a protection which no sharp arrow can pierce. He cannot be hurt; he cannot be wounded. His experience in life will admit of one change,—from *joyful* happiness in *glad* hours, to sad happiness in sorrow and tears. Whatever the change is, it will be peace and happiness still. Let us all learn then to say, "Thy will be done."

PRAYER AND FASTING.

This kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting.—What kind? A kind of hard, inveterate devils, that get into the heart and stay there. They used of old to take the form of lunatics, and often cast men into the fire, and often into the water. But they have changed somewhat their mode of operation, and having become more refined and quiet, more cunning and less tangible, are far more difficult to be cast out. They know better how to keep concealed, and how to act without violence. They used to inhabit only the hearts of pagans, and men dead in trespasses and sins, but since they have tried successfully the experiment of going into a heart empty and swept and garnished, and set up an establishment there, they often steal into the hearts of God's own people, yea, sometimes seven devils of them together, making no noise, but all so quietly and gradually, that the poor deceived heart does not even know their entrance.

But when they have so got in, it is sad havoc that they make with a man's piety. They fill the heart with tombs and desert places, they cast out its warm affections, and introduce habits of coldness and conformity to this world. They go so far, oftentimes, as to make secret prayer and family prayer to become a mere form and a burthen, and the word of God a sealed, unattractive book.—Sometimes for a season they get so completely the mastery, that there is nothing in the heart or the habits that can be called secret prayer at all. But when this is the case, then generally they are on the eve of some daring and riotous outbreak. They will take possession of men thus secretly mastered, as if they were swine, and will make them run violently down the steep places of their passions into the sea, and perish in the waters. And they who do not go thus outwardly lunatic are none the less to be pitied, so long as the devils stay secretly within them, and wander from room to room, eating up all the piety they can find, and destroying all the soul's spiritual power and comfort.

This kind goeth out but by prayer and fasting. But a man who has had these devils a long time, gets entirely out of the habit of such prayer and fasting as are requisite to overcome them. They are like rats, that stay and thrive in houses where there is much feasting and good cheer. Where there is little prayer and fasting, they have all things to their own mind, and grow strong and multiply. Then it becomes more and more difficult for the man that entertains these devils to pray and fast; but yet prayer and fasting become more and more necessary, if he wonld ever get back the command over himself, if he would have the Lord Jesus overcome

and dust and cast out the devils, and the Holy Spirit enter and make the heart a chamber of its own pure and peaceful abode.

In all spiritual duties, when there is the greatest necessity for them by reason of the soul declining state of the heart, then they are the most tedious and difficult. It is so with fasting and prayer, when there are many devils. And sometimes the whole church gets into such a state that you might as easily move a mountain with a hook, as get it to a truth in fasting and prayer. When there has been a long period of worldliness, comfort and ease, when Ephraim is prosperity has got settled on his lees, it is a very difficult thing to disturb him. The mere appointment of a day of fasting and prayer will not do it. The mere formal observance of a day of prayer and fasting will not do it. No, not though there be a good attendance on such a day, and good prayer-meetings attending it, and good Christians going without their dinners, and congratulating themselves that there is once more a fast day in the church. Oh no, that will not do it. Many a man may go without his dinner to frighten the devils, but invite them all back again at supper. Oh no, unless the fasting comes from the heart, and the heart weeps and prays in secret, there is nothing gained. *Real* fasting and prayer is hard work, when the evils in the heart have grown quietly and unperceived, and have lain undisturbed in a period of worldly conformity.

Alas! a man has to buckle on his armor, and labor and tug, and strive, before he even finds himself in such a state that he can *begin* to pray and fast in earnest. Depend upon it, ye Christians who have been fasting and praying, because such a season has been appointed, that your work is but commenced in the observance of such a day. It is a season given you to start from, not a journey gained. It is a signal, at which you are to enter into your closet, and shut your door, and knock, and weep, and pray, day after day, day after day. Now, if you begin to do *this* in the observance of a set day with others, you are indeed doing a great work. You have *adopted* a fast, such as God chooses, you are engaged in a work which the Savior loves to see, and if you persevere, the devils will give way before you, and the Holy Spirit will fill your heart with power, and peace and joy. But doubtless you must do this as an individual, and not in reliance upon church meetings. You must do it for YOUR OWN HEART, and not merely because the church needs reviving. The church *does* need reviving, but remember, it is because *you* need reviving.

DR. CHEEVER.

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SERMON CCCXIII.

ETERNITY CONTEMPLATED.

A NEW YEAR'S SERMON.

BY REV. JOEL HAWES, D. D.;

PASTOR OF THE FIRST CHURCH, HARTFORD, CONN.

Psalm xxxix: 4. "Lord make me to know mine end, and the measure of my days, what it is, that I may know how frail I am."

It was once alleged as a complaint against a certain minister by his hearers, that he did not preach to the times. He replied, that he thought it might be pardoned if, while so many were preaching to the times, one poor servant of Christ preached for eternity. The reply carries in it a weight of meaning which deserves the most serious consideration, and will give a direction to my thoughts in the present discourse. I wish to lead your views away from time, and fix them on eternity; to annihilate, as far as possible, the distance between this and the end of your earthly course, and bring directly before you the scenes of that invisible world, in which we must all very soon take up our everlasting abode. For the present hour, then, let the world with all its too absorbing concerns, be curtained from our view, and let us walk together in solemn, thoughtful step, on the shores of that vast ocean "which we must sail so soon." If the prospect be less inviting than some others that might be presented, it may, nevertheless, be more useful in its influence, and leave us, at the close of this service, better prepared to go back to the duties and cares which we have to meet in this state of our probation and temporary abode.

"O! eternity! eternity!" exclaimed an infidel, as he lay in despair upon his death-bed; O! eternity, eternity! Who can paraphrase the words for ever and ever? I feel the difficulty. There is a meaning in them which our limited powers cannot fathom. The finite cannot comprehend the infinite. As we stretch our minds to take in the boundless prospect, we sink back in conscious weakness, and feel that it is but a glimpse that we can get of the illimitable scene which lies before us, and which we designate by the term eternity. If we go to the Dictionary, we find that term defined to be duration, without beginning or end. In this view, we

may be said to occupy a certain point in eternity. We look back upon a duration that never began, and forward to a duration that is never to end. God is the only Being of whom eternity, in this sense, can be predicated. He is without beginning of days or end of years; the same yesterday, to-day and for ever. He inhabits eternity, it is his proper dwelling-place; past and future have no meaning in application to the duration of his being. But in respect to ourselves and our fellow-men, eternity denotes an endless duration to come. We look back a few brief years and reach the period when we were not. We came into being, as it were, but yesterday, and to-morrow we cease to be where we now are; we pass from this state of living men, and all that is visible of us is laid in the ground and turns to dust. And if this were the end of our being, eternity could have no meaning in relation to us. It could only be said of us, as of the beasts that perish, that we lived and moved a few days upon earth, and then passed into a state of non-existence.

But though the body dies and falls back to its original dust, the spirit lives, and lives for ever; so that eternity, *absolute eternity*, viewed in relation to the future, is predicable of every one of us. We have entered upon an existence which is never to end. Our future being is to run on parallel with that of God himself. Immortality does not, indeed, belong to us as an essential or independent property of our souls. As we derived our being from God, so we are dependent on Him for its continuance. All the arguments for the soul's immortality, derived from the nature of the spirit, seem to me of little weight. My faith in the endless existence of the soul depends on the testimony of Him who made and holds me in being. That testimony is contained in his own blessed word of truth; and on the ground of it we have the fullest assurance that there lies before each of us an endless existence—a state of being which is never to terminate. The heavens and the earth are to pass away, and all the monuments of art and works of man cease to be; but the soul has received from the Creator the impress of eternity. It is to exist for ever.

But this is a very imperfect view of the eternity for which we are destined. It is not simple duration of being that we are called to contemplate; but the duration of all our powers of action, and of enjoyment, and suffering. There is to be eternal consciousness, eternal thought, eternal feeling, eternal reason, eternal memory, eternal living, active mind. And more; we have reason to believe that the powers of the soul will not only continue in being in another world, but will acquire, on entering that world, new activity, strength and expansion, and go on increasing for ever in capacity for enjoyment or suffering. This belief is justified both by philosophy and religion; and what an affecting, glorious, awful prospect does it open before us? We are now but in the infancy of our being—just ushered into existence in a state of extreme imperfection and weakness; our minds cumbered with a gross material body; our faculties most imperfectly developed, and all our views

obscure and clouded. But O! the scene which spreads before us! In a few days we drop these tabernacles of clay; are born into a new world, entirely unlike that which we now inhabit; and our immortal spirits, emancipated from the thraldom of earth and sense, enter upon a state not only of endless being, but of endless advancement in all the capacities of thought, of feeling, of enjoyment and suffering. Who can estimate the value of a soul possessing such a nature, and with such prospects before it? And what significancy does this view impart to the question propounded by our Saviour:—"What is a man profited if he gain the whole world and lose his soul; or what shall he give in exchange for his soul?"

From this general view of eternity, let us pass to notice some circumstances connected with it, in which we all have a deep personal interest. And

1. *It is very near.* But a step, and we pass into the unseen world, and are fixed in an everlasting state. It may seem otherwise to us. Amid the busy cares of life, we are very apt to forget that we are mortal. Like the rich fool in the parable, we are prone to delude ourselves with the thought that we have goods laid up for many years, shall live to accomplish all our plans, and realize all our pictures of earthly happiness. But the summons comes, and we are hurried away. The stream of time, on which we are embarked, is bearing us silently but swiftly to the end of life's voyage. As we pass down the current, we may sometimes imagine that we stand still, and are wont to amuse ourselves with looking at the objects on either side, and with plucking here and there a flower from the shore; but ere we are aware the roar of the ocean is heard, and we are off upon the unknown deep! O! that we were more regardful of the notes of warning which God is continually addressing to us, that there is but a step between us and eternity! Indeed, we are all standing at the very door of eternity! Those before us are fast pressing through—we as fast pressing after them: soon we shall have passed within, and the gate closes upon us for ever. Every time the pulse beats, a soul passes into eternity; and more than eighty thousand every day. Since the last New Year, upwards of thirty millions of immortal beings have finished their earthly course, and become inhabitants of eternity! In twenty years, *in ten years*, where will the most of us be? In eternity, dwelling beneath the smiles of God, or lying under his righteous condemnation. Some will remain awhile longer; but the longest life is but a span, and it ends in eternity.

2. Our passage into eternity is hung about with scenes of solemn and affecting interest. I speak not here of the pains and troubles, of the disappointments and sorrows, which we shall meet with on our way. I speak of the passage—"It is through sickness, death, and the grave." There is no other way into that invisible world to which we hasten. Enoch was, indeed, translated that he should not see death. Elijah was taken from the earth and

carried to Heaven in a chariot of fire. And those who remain on earth at the second coming of Christ, will, we are informed, be changed in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, and thus be caught up to meet the Lord in the air. But this is not our allotment. We must sicken, die, go down to the grave, and pass, each one alone, through the dark valley, to our dwelling-place in eternity. We may, indeed, be smitten down by a sudden stroke of Providence, and thus escape the pains and wastings of protracted disease. But it is much more probable that our exit from this world will be by sickness; perhaps by long and distressing sickness, breaking down by degrees the frame-work of the spirit, and dismissing us hence, not till our flesh and strength are consumed and life itself has become a burden to us. However this may be, we must all enter into eternity through death and the grave. However long we may live, or however uninterrupted our enjoyment of health and earthly happiness, one destiny awaits us all. The time will come when we must lie down on our bed and die; when we must know, in our experience, the nature of that mysterious change which separates the living spirit from the mortal body; conveys the one into the presence of God, and lays the other in the grave to be the food of corruption and worms. Solemn change! Nature shrinks and shudders at its approach; but there is no avoiding it. It is the door of eternity, and through it we must all soon pass to our dwelling-place in the world of spirits.

3. On entering into eternity our modes of existence and sources of enjoyment are entirely changed. To earth and earthly scenes we bid a final adieu. When we die, we look upon them for the last time. The curtain drops, and they are hidden from us for ever. All those things which now so absorb our thoughts and occupy our hands—the pursuit of wealth, ambition, pleasure, and the innumerable ways in which men seek happiness and find it not; all will be to us as though they had never been, or be remembered only as having helped or hindered us in our preparations for eternity.

Now, creatures of sense and prone to seek our enjoyments in the things of sense; *then*, we shall be disembodied spirits, dwelling in a spiritual world, far away from earth and time, inhabitants of eternity. It is a place and mode of existence of which we can now form no conception. This only we know, that we shall be conscious living spirits, dwelling in the midst of spirits like ourselves, all in the realized presence of God, and deriving happiness, if happiness we shall have, not from the objects of earth and sense, but from sources adapted to spiritual natures. All, I say, in the *realized* presence of God, for so the scriptures teach us; and whatever more may be meant by this, it is doubtless to be inferred from it that in eternity it will be impossible to exclude God from the thoughts, or escape from the consciousness of His all-surrounding presence, and of His all-penetrating eye. We shall *feel* that He is near to our very souls; and the purity of his character and the

principles of His government will come home in such clear and living contact to our spirits, that if we are found of a temper oppisite to Him, or not prepared to rejoice in Him as our portion, we shall be overwhelmed with shame, and guilt, and remorse, and there will not be left for us in the universe a place of the least enjoyment or hope, because there will not be left a place where we shall be able to shun the presence, or escape the notice of the glorious Being by whom we shall feel ourselves to be every moment and every where surrounded.

4. When we pass into eternity, the period of our probation will be ended, and our state unalterably fixed. Our condition in the present world is that of probationers for eternal life. We are placed here for a season, with various parts assigned us to perform on the stage of action. At the close of our allotted period, our God and Judge will call us into his presence, and we shall hear from Him the joyous plaudit of "Well done, good and faithful servant;" or the awful sentence of final exclusion from His kingdom and glory. We are now living and acting for eternity; sowing the seeds of immortal bliss or endless woe; laying up treasures in Heaven, or preparing for ourselves a cup of trembling in the world of despair. Our actions end not with the performance of them. They throw forward their results into the state beyond the grave, and there we must meet and bear for ever the consequences of what we do and neglect to do in this state of our probation. O! that we realised, as we ought, that we are now on probation for eternity. It is the only probation we shall ever have. Our present time of trial decides our fate for ever. On passing into another world we enter upon a state of unchanging destiny. Our connections are eternal, our pursuits, our character, our allotments, all eternal. No new world lies beyond. The moment we pass behind the curtain that veils eternity from our view, we open our eyes upon a prospect literally boundless, and looking onward and onward, we see ages rising after ages in a succession which will begin for ever, and *we* shall be in Heaven or in hell.

5. On entering eternity, we go to appear before God in judgment. It is appointed unto men once to die, and after that the judgment. This is the decree of Him who holds our destiny in His hands; and there is no reversal of it. Here, thoughtless mortals are wont to be unbelieving as to a day of coming retribution, and vainly flatter themselves that God does not mean what He says, when He declares that he has appointed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness, and that we shall all of us stand before His judgment seat, each to give an account of himself unto Him, the great Judge of the quick and the dead. But the ordeal of death puts an end to all unbelief on this subject, and conveys the unembodied soul into the immediate presence of God, to be tried and judged for eternity. On passing into the future world, each of us will stand face to face before that glorious Being on whose sentence hangs our immortal destiny. We shall see

Him, as He is, the Judge of the World; and all our deeds done here in the body will be set before us in the light of His countenance. Our whole character and life, our thoughts, words, and actions, all we did and all we neglected to do of our duty in this state of probation, will pass in review before our judge, and will go to swell the account which each of us will have to render of himself on the great day of final decision.

By a process of mind, now to us wholly unknown, the entire map of our lives will lie spread out before us; and we shall feel, the whole universe will feel, that the sentence of the Judge, whatever it be, is right. At the close of our trial, the awful decision will be proclaimed, which will convey to each one of us endless happiness or endless woe. No future trial exists at which it might be reversed. The sentence of God has gone forth, and the fate of every child of Adam is sealed for ever. I add,

6. That in eternity one of two abodes awaits us. There are but two ways leading to eternity—the narrow way of life, and the broad way of death. There are but two resting-places for the sons of men in eternity—Heaven and hell; the state of eternal glory and blessedness, and the state of endless darkness and despair. In one or the other of these places we are to take up our everlasting abode, whenever it shall please God to call us away from this scene of earth and time—in which is to be decided by the character we are now forming. If we repent of sin, believe in Christ, and serve God in a life of devotedness to His cause and glory, we shall, on passing into eternity, ascend to dwell with Him in Heaven, to enjoy for ever the smiles of his presence, and the reward of his love. But if we live in impenitence and die in sin, if we neglect the salvation of the gospel and choose our portion in the world, instead of choosing it in God; then, on leaving our present state of being, we shall find ourselves in a miserable eternity, inhabitants of hell and heirs of endless despair. Such is the close of human probation; these the inevitable allotments of all the children of men.

Let us now ask what influence this view of eternity should have on our practical feelings and habits.

1. In the first place, it should lead to serious self-examination, and make us wisely considerate of our latter end. What is the life we are now living? A vapor that appeareth for a little moment and then vanisheth away. Whither is it conducting us? To the grave and eternity. What awaits us in that unseen world to which we are hastening? Heaven or hell; the joys of immortal life, or the pains of endless death. Pause, then, immortal man, and ponder the path of your feet. Examine well the frame of your spirit, and the tenor of your life. There are fearful responsibilities connected with this state of being; and no wise man should be ignorant of them, or fail to regard them with the most serious consideration. The close of life, and its affecting termination in eternity is apt to be lost sight of amid the cares of this world and the delu-

sions of time. Retire, then, from the tumult and bustle of earthly pursuits, and seriously think of the hour rapidly drawing on, when all your best friends can do for you, is to lay you in your coffin, convey you to your grave, and leave you to moulder back to dust. Carry your thoughts forward to the day of your appearance before God, and with the scenes of the final judgment in view, ask whether your present course of life is such as will bear the review of that day? What are your leading objects of pursuit in this life, which is hastening to a close, and what provision are you making for that life, beyond the grave, which is never to end? What degree of thought and attention do you bestow on God, his law, his gospel, and that account which you are soon to render to Him of the deeds done in the body? In what degree is your conduct governed by a sense of his presence, and by the authority of his will? In what manner do you discharge the duties which are incumbent on you in the various relations which you sustain in life? Has the great work of moral renovation been begnn in your soul? Do you know what repentance is? what faith is? and what it is to live a life of communion with God, and of growing meetness for his kingdom? If these things are forgotten by you, if they have no practical lodgment in your mind, you have reason to tremble at your situation, and to mourn for the day that is coming upon you.

Rather forget your worldly interests, your health, your life, your nearest earthly friends, than that eternity which is so near and so certain. "A man who has a cause to be heard to-morrow, in which his life or his character is concerned, cannot forget it. A wretch that is condemned to die to-morrow cannot forget it. How amazing, then, the infatuation of men to forget eternal joy, eternal wo, the eternal God, and the place of their eternal abode, when they stand even at the door, and any moment may hurry them away to the scenes of unending destiny? I stand not here to utter fiction, or to indulge in conjecture. I speak of admitted verities, of death, judgment, eternity, heaven, hell, and I would fain lead you to think and judge of these things as you will, when time is passed, and its delusions vanished, and your naked souls have seen the Lord your Judge. It is but a step, and we are in eternity; and what I desire is to bring eternity so near as to overcome the natural resistance of the heart to think on these things, and to engage you, each one, to inquire with all seriousness, what and where you shall be when a few more days and nights shall have passed over you, and you shall be summoned away from the scenes of earth and time. To think often and seriously on these things becomes creatures like us, inhabitants of earth to-day, and of eternity to-morrow; and to neglect or put away such thoughts from the mind can result in nothing but the endless disappointment and ruin of the soul.

2. Eternity duly realised would restrain the spirit of worldliness, and lead us to use this world as not abusing it. Here is the great danger which threatens the immortal interests of men at the pres-

ent day. Unwonted prosperity smiles around them. New channels of enterprise and wealth are opening on every side; and in their eagerness to rush forward and occupy them, they are in the greatest danger of neglecting God and their souls, and of being swept down to perdition by that absorbing worldliness which is rolling over the land.

Here, christians as well as others, are eminently exposed; and if they are not on their guard, piety will wither and die in their bosoms, and their religion become a dull and lifeless formality. How shall the world be kept in its proper place and the heart elevated above its stupifying, bewildering influence? Keep your eyes on eternity; remember that you are to be here but a few days, and that your great business while here, is not to gratify the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life, but to prepare to die and give up your account unto God. If your affections begin to go out after the riches, honors and pleasures of the world, and in the midst of all, your religion grows cold, and your responsibility to God is lost sight of, pause awhile, and consider how these things which now so much absorb your attention, will appear to you on your dying bed, what comfort they will afford you on your passage to eternity, or when you shall be called to review life amid the scenes of final judgment. Would not this hold in check the love of the world, and lead you to form those sober estimates of things temporal, which are most consistent with your duty to God, and best adapted to secure your immortal interests? If you would live above the world while you live in it, escape its temptations and snares and those foolish and hurtful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition, converse, often and seriously, with death and eternity; think how soon you must pass out of this world, and be forgotten here, as if you had never been, and how infinitely poor are all the treasures of earth, considered in relation to the immortal spirit, and its approaching trial before the bar of judgment.

3. Eternity realised would prevent spiritual declension, make you lively and earnest in prayer, and diligent and faithful in all the duties of the christian life. All backsliding from God is brought on by losing sight of eternity. No one forsakes the fountain of living waters, till he turns his thoughts away from the scenes of coming destiny, and begins, like the rich fool in the parable, to indulge in the delusive feeling, that he has goods laid up for many years, and shall have a long time to enjoy them. Is it not so my friends? Could you depart from God if you realised eternity? Could you be cold and formal in prayer, if you duly considered what scenes are before you, or grow remiss and negligent in the service of your Savior, if you reflected how soon you will need his presence to support you on your death bed, and his grace to pardon and save you before the throne of judgment?

How do spiritual declension, and neglect of prayer and unfruitfulness in religion appear to those who are about to die and go into

eternity? How will they appear to you in that solemn hour which is approaching, when you must bid adieu to earthly things, and go to meet the decisions of a righteous tribunal? Ah, brethren! we may make light of declension now, and think coldness in prayer and formality in God's service small matters. But eternity will show them in a very different light; and if they are found upon us as we draw near to that unseen world, hope will depart, and shivering despair seize upon our souls unmeet to appear before God.

4. Eternity realised would make us anxious to prepare others, as well as ourselves, to meet its awful scenes in peace. How is it with persons who feel that they are about to leave the world and go into eternity? They are anxious to improve their last moments, and last remains of strength in speaking to their friends on the great subject of religion, in warning them of the danger of delay, and in exhorting them to live near God, if they would die in hope and have peace in their latter end. Just so should we feel and converse, if we were suitably impressed with the powers of the world to come, and realised how soon we and all around us shall die and be in eternity. We should not only be quickened in preparation for so solemn a change ourselves, but we should feel an interest in the spiritual welfare of others, and do all in our power to bring them to Christ and salvation. It would be impossible for us to journey on with fellow travellers to eternity without speaking to them of the way and of the end, and striving by our prayers, our counsels and our efforts to turn their feet from the road of death into the path of life and heaven. And engaging in this work in the tenderness and earnestness of spirit, which a realizing sense of eternity would inspire, a peculiar power would attend our endeavors; we should have a divine skill in reaching the heart and conscience, and many, who are now perishing in sin, would be awakened to consider their ways and turn to the Lord. But we lose sight of eternity or throw its scenes far into the future, and so feel but little the power of its motives, and do but little to prepare either ourselves or others for the inevitable destiny. And even what we do attempt in this way fails, much of it, entirely, of effect, because it is done without any suitable impression of the powers of the world to come. I add,

5. Eternity realised habitually would make us useful and happy; calm and submissive under the trials of life, knowing them to be but for a moment; diligent and active to do the whole will of God, peaceful in our death, and blessed forever in the presence of our Savior. We should feel that we are strangers and pilgrims on earth, having here no continuing city, but seeking one to come. We should look upon the world as a traveller in a strange land does upon the place where he lodges for a night. Instead of stopping on our way to amuse ourselves with toys and trifles, we should make everything subservient to speed us on our journey. Our hearts would be on our home; and thither we should be pressing forward with eager step, cheered with the hope of there ending

our cares and toils, and of receiving the joyful welcome of kindred and friends, and of our blessed Savior himself, to the everlasting joys of his kingdom.

And when the end of our course should draw near, far from being unwelcome to us, we should hail it with joy; have a desire to part and be with Christ, as the Apostle had; rise above every fear of death and go to dwell eternally in the presence of God and the Lamb.

Let us then, my friends, strive to realise eternity, how near, how certain it is; how awful, how glorious its scenes; awful indeed to the wicked, and finally impenitent; but glorious, inconceivably glorious to all who love God, and faithfully serve him in this state of probation. Let the commencement of a new year remind us how rapidly life is passing away, and how soon all the years and days we have to spend in this world will be gone. Many who were with us at the commencement of the year just closed, are now in eternity. Ere the present year shall end, many of us who are now alive and in health will sicken and die, and be gathered with the great congregation of the departed in the eternal state. O that we may all be prepared for this great and decisive change.

If to any present these shall seem gloomy thoughts, let me say the reality far surpasses the representations that have now been made. Let me say, too, that the time is at hand when every impenitent sinner will be amazed at his present indifference to the great concerns of the soul. God and the judgment, death and eternity, heaven and hell—these are not matters to be trifled with. However little thought of now, they will soon be present, and every soul will feel them in all their amazing weight and solemnity. O when the inevitable summons shall come; when it shall be, that probation is ended, and the sinner's doom sealed for eternity what a change will it make in the feelings and views of some whom I am now addressing? It is easy now to dismiss these thoughts as gloomy. But when Justice shall take the work of retribution in hand, these thoughts, now so easily put away, will be so pressed upon the soul, that it will never be able to dismiss or turn away from them; no, never, for a long eternity. The present world will then have retired forever from our view. Time will have numbered its last hour. The all decisive change of death will have passed upon you; the vast world to which you are going will have opened its boundless scenes and you will be fixed, every one, in a state of happiness or misery which is never to end. O what a prospect is this? How wise, how important that you prepare for what is before you? I close with propounding a single question, and I pray God to dispose you, each one, to answer it as you will wish you had on the great day of account: Is it not better to remember these things on earth, than in hell; before your Savior, than before your judge; in the day of grace than in the day of retribution?

SERMON CCCXIV.

BY REV. GEORGE B. CHEEVER, D. D.

OF NEW YORK.

PROBATIONARY DISCIPLINE.

LUKE xiii, 6, 9. He spake also this parable: "A certain man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard; and he came and sought fruit thereon, and found none. Then said he unto the man of his vineyard, Behold, these three years I came seeking fruit on this fig tree, and found none: cut it down; why cumbereth it the ground? And he answering, said unto him, Lord, let it alone this year, also, till I shall dig about it and dung it: and if it bear fruit, well: and if not, then, after that, thou shalt cut it down."

THIS beautiful parable illustrates in the most striking manner, the dealings of God with his rebellious creatures. The wide world is his vineyard; its inhabitants are the trees that he has planted for eternity. Those that bring forth fruit in its season are called "trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord that he might be glorified," and shall flourish in immortal beauty in the Paradise of life. He seeks fruit from all, and uses a thousand merciful expedients to produce it; and for its production there is an allotted period, in the infinite goodness of good; a period in which His mercy waits upon the sinner, while yet the opportunity of repentance and pardon is afforded, and the blessed Spirit of God is ready to sanctify the soul.

The truths taught in this parable are of infinite importance; the nature of our situation as probationers for eternity; the nature and purpose of God's discipline in regard to us; and the consequences of abusing that discipline, or of neglecting it and suffering it to be wasted, are all brought to view. Let us dwell for the moment upon each of these topics; and may the Spirit of God bless this parable for our souls.

I. First, then, we inhabit a world of probation. The three score years and ten that we spend here are only the narrow portal to an existence of endless duration, endless retribution. We are constantly forgetful of this truth, constantly unmindful of the solemn warning of that word probation, with reference to our future state. We are on trial for the destinies of eternity. This is what gives to time all its value. Why is a year to us of such amazing importance? It is because we are immortal, because eternity is before us, because the years of our existence are never to find an end. A year is valuable, not because earthly interests and worldly transactions are involved in its flight; not because

power and riches may be lost or won, empires founded or overturned, cities enriched or laid in ruins; but because business is transacting for Eternity, because the interests of Eternity are crowded into moments, because every one's character for Eternity is forming, and every one's work for Eternity accomplishing, and every one's doom deciding, in this fleeting transitory span of time. Time with us is precious, because we are to live when time shall be no longer, because on every moment that passes, the destiny of immortal beings hangs suspended. Every thing we do, think, say, goes to make up the account we are to render at the bar of judgment; and all the discipline, to which we are subject as moral beings in this world, bears upon our Eternal destiny. Time with us is precious, because it is the season of hope. What we sow here, we reap hereafter, and if we please, we may sow the seeds of everlasting blessedness.

We are all living for Eternity. You have sometimes heard the careless and thoughtless, the men of the world and the votaries of pleasure, designated as those who are not living for Eternity. But they *are* living for Eternity, and that too with a dreadful energy, and in a dreadful sense. There is not a human being who is not every day, every hour, living for Eternity. The merchant in his counting-room, the mechanic in his work-shop, the seaman on the ocean, the husbandman on the land, the miser and the spendthrift, the laboring man and the indolent, the physician, the lawyer, and the clergyman, the man of poverty and the man of wealth, the thoughtful and the thoughtless, the pious and profane, the praying man, the scoffer, and the atheist, all, all live for Eternity. None can avoid it, no occupation can prevent it, no power of thoughtlessness can throw off the dread responsibility. The christian and the impenitent, the converted and the unconverted, are living equally for Eternity; but there is this vast difference: the christian is *conscious* of it, and takes care *how* he lives; and watches for the strait and narrow way that leads to eternal blessedness; the impenitent man is unconscious of it, and in reckless, voluntary blindness, rushes to eternal ruin. Such is our probationary state, so brief, so solemn.

II. In the second place, the nature and purpose of God's discipline in regard to us are presented in this parable. In this brief period of preparation for eternity, God is at work as well as we. Brief as it is, it is enough for us to work in, enough for God to work in. With him, one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. So they are with us, with respect to our own immortality, and our work for the world to come. Enough for God to display the exhaustless riches of His grace and expedients of His wisdom in our moral discipline; enough for us, through a wise improvement of His mercy, to work out our own salvation, or through a vile and brutish neglect and abuse of that mercy, to make sure our everlasting perdition.

In this period, God is working, never wearied, for our good.

This is the nature and purpose of all his discipline in regard to us. He is ever seeking to bring his creatures to repentance, and to make them partakers of his own holiness. From the store-house of infinite wisdom and infinite love, he pours upon them influences of goodness, and surrounds them with circumstances adapted to aid those influences, to produce the fruit he loves to behold. With the efforts of his grace he combines the wise expedients of his providence, and all he does is for the improvement of their character, to make them holy, and therefore happy. He is "long-suffering toward us not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." Behold what amazing resources He displays, and with what unsearchable riches of grace, and of patience, He lavishes his gifts. Influences richer than the Universe, he pours upon us. Exertions of wisdom and love, matured in His councils from Eternity, and executed for us in the fulness of time, He brings in all their redeeming and renovating energy, to bear upon our fallen state. Motives of power to allure the minds of loftiest archangels he sets before us. Truths of glorious and awful import he reveals to our minds. He sends the spirit of God to bring into near view the forgotten realities of Eternity, and almost lifts the veil that separates the future world from mortal sight. By the power of that Divine Agent the conscience within us is roused to execute its work, and the Law on Sinai is proclaimed in our ears, and we are made to know its dreadful sentence, and to feel that under its condemnation we are hastening to the judgment. By day and by night God is striving with us to arrest us in our downward course, and to turn our feet from the way of death. "In a dream, in the visions of the night, when deep sleep falleth upon man, in slumbering upon the bed, then he openeth the ears of man, and sealeth their instruction, that he may withdraw man from his purpose, and hide pride from man."

By the power of the same Divine Agent, the scenes and agony in the garden of Gethsemane, the mysterious glories a Savior's dying love upon Calvary, and the melting entreaties of that love in the offer of pardoning mercy, and the invitation to everlasting life, are ever before us. The book itself, that contains these wonders, these soul-arresting mysteries of moral grandeur, is ever in our eye, attracting our notice, forced on our attention, quoted for our good, referred to in all pages, an inmate of all families. Its teachings are with us in all places of our education, and the very institutions of society reflect its influences. Its voices of warning are echoed from a thousand sources, and its solemn and affectionate spirit has been breathed into a thousand familiar volumes. Its own expostulations, above all, are of such amazing earnestness and power that no reflecting mind can withstand them, none can remain utterly insensible in the midst of them. Its light flashes like a flaming sword across the path to hell, as though it would bar all access to the world of wo, and its pleading remonstrance never ceases ringing in our ears, Turn ye, turn ye for why will ye die?

Then, along with the Bible, there is its fellow laborer, the holy Sabbath, ceaselessly renewing its persuasions, and calling us back to God. A seventh portion of our whole time, its influences are at work upon us. When the noise of the world has subsided, so that the voices of Eternity may be heard, then its power comes over us. The very sight of the house of God, even amidst the whirl of the world's business, is a memento of Eternity, and every week we are regularly summoned to our preparation for the last great day. Around us are the visible disciples of the Savior, journeying heaven-ward; the profession of the weakest of them speaks to the conscience, and the life of the holiest is a continual sermon all the week long. And the death-beds of the righteous and the wicked, oftentimes more than all things else awaken us to reflection.

Then, there is the recurrence of times and seasons. The months are marked, and warn us of the flight of time. The seasons, with their changes, have a moral for the conscience. The closing year solemnly addresses the soul. Then, in the midst of life we know that we are in death. His shafts fly thick around us. The bells toll at his bidding, and the funeral passes, and momently awes every spectator. The tombs of our fathers are around us, and we visit the graves of our friends.

Thus by God's providences he gives power to the provisions of his grace, and the institutions of the gospel. He sends judgments to awaken us, chastisements to rebuke us, afflictions to loosen the ties of earth, and break the bondage of sin, and makes us hate its pleasures. He sends, in oft-repeated sicknesses, forerunners to remind us that death is on the way, and in oft-repeated bereavements, messengers to make us feel that this is not our rest, and to say to us: "Be ye also ready." By his afflictions He would humble us, by his mercies He would lead us to gratitude, by all his dealings He would bring us to repentance. "Lo, all these things worketh God oftentimes with man, to bring back his soul from the pit, to be enlightened with the light of the living." The voice that breaks from everything around us, and is awakened by the monitor within us is this: "Prepare to meet thy God!" The stars that look down from heaven seem to utter it; the sun and the moon in their courses proclaim it. Everything that God hath made speaks to us of Him, and in that declaration of His character, reminds us that our destiny is in His hands, and that the hour is coming when we shall stand before Him in judgment, and suggests to us the question, Am I ready to meet my God?

Now the question comes to us amid all these efforts of our Heavenly Father for our good, what have we done with them, what use have we made of them? What return have we given for them? Amid all these influences, numberless and powerful, of providence and grace, what is our character in the sight of God? Have they been wasted upon us, or are the trees, around whose roots God has softened and enriched the earth, and upon whose branches He has shed the dews of His grace, fair to the sight of

their owner, and laden with the fruits of righteousness? Have we lived to God's glory, or have we been empty vines, bringing forth fruit unto ourselves? Are we now trusting in Christ for the pardon of our sins, continuing daily in repentance and prayer, living with ceaseless reference to eternal realities, endeavoring in all things to please God; and thus, through his abounding grace, ripening in holiness for his blissful presence?

It is a solemn thing to look back through any period of life, and attempt to confute the number and power of God's gracious efforts for our eternal good. What abundant time and opportunity we have enjoyed for communion with Him; what privileges for perpetual growth in grace, what means of acquisition in the knowledge of the Scriptures and the love of Christ, what a rich succession of sabbaths and seasons of prayer, and what mighty inducements for holy dilligence in the use of all these privileges! What must that depravity be, which could pass through such a series of blessed influences, such an ordeal of God's saving mercy, such an unbroken effort of His goodness, and come out unchanged!

Lord, with what care hast Thou begirt us round!
Parents first season us; then schoolmasters
Deliver us to laws; they send us bound
To rules of reason, holy messengers,
Pulpits and Sundays; sorrow dogging sin;
Afflictions sorted; anguish of all sizes;
Fine nets and stratagems to catch us in;
Bibles laid open; millions of surprises;
Blessings before hand; ties of gratefulness;
The sound of glory ringing in our ears;
Without, our shame; within, our consciences;
Angels and grace; eternal hopes and fears!
Yet all these fences, and their whole array,
One cunning bosom-sin blows quite away!

III. The view we have now taken of God's salutary discipline in regard to us, though most imperfect, inadequate, and feeble, prepares us in some measure to consider, in the third place, the consequences of abusing that discipline, or of suffering it to be wasted.

In the first place, let it be remembered that the present scene of probation is the only season in which that precious ameliorating discipline can be enjoyed. There is no change of character in Eternity, there are no means of grace beyond the grave. It is not the place of hope, but of destiny. There are no invitations of a Saviour's love, no offers of pardon, no motives to repentance. There are no Bibles, no sabbaths, no attendant influences of the Holy Spirit. Here, and here only, the power of these blessed agents and influences is tried upon us. There the season of probation is ended, and retribution takes its place. The man who dies unchanged amid the power of God's goodness enduring for his repentance, but wasted upon him, will live unchanged in his iniquity, and hopeless in the sufferance of its penalty, for ever and ever, For the sentence is, "He that is filthy, let him be filthy still," and "as the tree falleth, so it lieth;" and he whose soul rejects the

strivings of the Spirit here, and passes into eternity unmoved and unrepentant from all the exhibitions of a Saviour's love, and unarrested in a world of hope by all the movements of God's providence and grace in his behalf, will find, in a world of despair, that there remaineth no more sacrifice for sin, but a certain fearful looking for of judgment and of fiery indignation.

In the second place, let it be remembered that every mercy of God which the sinner has wasted, will be to him, in the period of remorse, a source of never-ending anguish. In every providence disregarded, every privilege abused, every effort of the Holy Spirit disobeyed and slighted, he has armed a foe against his own soul through Eternity. God's blessed grace is not to be trifled with. His wasted mercies work their own revenge. Every precious sabbath thrown away, every holy sermon unheeded, every gracious warning despised, every invitation rejected, will be a remembrance of exceeding agony in the world of woe. The images of abused mercies will rise up in judgment against him, they will track his path, they will hunt his soul, no longer in the form of mercies, but of fiery fiends. We know that there is nothing in *this* world more bitter, than the recollection of the kindness of friends, recompensed with ingratitude. If life were full of *such* recollections, life would be full of misery. But eternity *will* be filled with such recollections. From God we have received nothing but mercies; to God the impenitent have returned nothing but sins: mercies on the one side, guilt and ingratitude on the other. Eternity will be filled with a never-ending crowd of the memories of God's goodness trampled under foot, but now recoiling in agony upon the soul.

Let it be remembered, in the third place, that every neglect and abuse of God's gracious discipline, hardens the soul in sin. As the months of probation roll round, and successively find the sinner unrepentant, they leave him more obdurate and hopeless in his state. He becomes habituated to God's mercies, and they cease to move him; accustomed to God's judgments, and they cease to alarm him. Providences lose their power, warnings are more unheeded, invitations and entreaties are met with careless indifference, the strivings of the Holy Spirit are repelled with dim stupidity, there is no arrow in God's quiver that reaches the soul. One after another, the whole storehouse of his expedients is proved and wasted, and every renewal of the trial finds them less efficacious than before. The tree that, amid all the efforts of the dresser of the vineyard, yields no fruit this year, is more confirmed in barrenness the next. Procrastination does its deadly work; the habit of iniquity grows too strong to be overcome, the heart too insensible to be softened. Ephraim is joined to idols; let him alone.

Let it be remembered, in the fourth place, that life is utterly uncertain, and that, though God is plenteous in mercy, there is a limit to his forbearance. He will not always suffer our delay; he will not for ever wait upon the sinner. Already He may have said: "This year thou shalt die!" Already, in regard to some of the

congregation, in the plenitude of health and spirits, Death may have received his individual commission. As God walks through and surveys his vineyard, in regard to how many do we hear him saying: "Lo! these three years I come, seeking fruit on this fig-tree, and find none;" and if he should now add: "Cut it down; why cumbereth it the ground?" it would be just and right. It is wondrous mercy that that command has not already been issued; for not three years alone, but very many years, has he sought fruit but found none.

My friends, if you had a tree endued with an intelligent will, capable of giving its fruit in its season, and upon its cultivation you had bestowed great care; if you had planted it in a pleasant, sunny, advantageous situation, and shielded it from the frosts and the winds; if you had caused the early and the latter rain to fall on it softly, and the sweet dews of heaven to visit it in their season; if you had loosened and enriched the soil in which its roots were striking, and made it soft with showers, and blest the springing thereof; and if, amid all this tenderness of cultivation, this profusion of care, the plant thus patiently and sedulously nourished should refuse to open for you its blossoms, or to yield for you its fruit, remaining a barren, unsightly stock in your enclosure, is there any doubt you would say, "Cut it down; why cumbereth it the ground?" And if, in addition to all this, it should send out from its branches a withering influence, to blast the luxuriant region where you had planted it, you would say, "It is nigh unto cursing, and its end is to be burned."

Now an angel might tell you, or the dresser of the vineyard, if, with the axe in his hand, at the command of his Lord, he should speak to you, might say, and would say, that this is but a picture of your own situation, if your hearts are alienated from God. He has planted you wholly a noble vine, and you have become "the degenerate plant of a strange vine." From childhood and youth, the influences of heavenly grace have fallen upon you, the efforts of God's providence have surrounded you, the early and the latter rain of the Spirit has visited you; but your heart for all this is no better: it is hardened, careless, ungrateful. You have lived amid the shining beams of the sun of righteousness, and have grown within the very garden of the Lord; but all these privileges, and all this tender care of God, have been wasted upon you; despite of it all, you are worthless in the sight of God. Behold, these many years he has come seeking fruit upon you, and has found none. These many years he has been upon the point to say, "Cut it down; why cumbereth it the ground?" but mercy has interposed; let it alone this year also, and if it bear fruit, well; if not, then, after that, thou shalt cut it down. Yet you are still not only unproductive in God's service, but in the example of your forgetfulness of God, shedding a destructive influence over all around you. There is a fearful portrait of such a character, and a dread prediction of the fate resulting from it, in the language of the

Apostle: "For the earth, which drinketh in the rain that cometh oft upon it, and bringeth forth herbs meet for them by whom it was dressed, receiveth blessing from it; but that which beareth thorns and briers is rejected, and is nigh unto cursing, *whose end is to be burned.*"

This is the last consequence, the consummation of consequences, for eternity. The man thus cut down, dry and withered, is to be burned in the fire of his own sins. This is the testimony of our blessed Lord, in a discourse of unequalled tenderness, but of great solemnity: "If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth, as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned." Couple this with the declaration of Christ in the same gospel: "If ye believe not that I am He, ye shall die in your sins," and you have an image of that fire from which God's discipline of grace and mercy in Christ would save you, but of which, if God's efforts are in your case wasted and unavailing, that discipline will but constitute a part of the fuel. "As therefore the tares are gathered and burned in the fire, so shall it be in the end of this world. The Son of Man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity; and they shall cast them into a furnace of fire; there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth."

These truths are always solemn, but they come knocking at the soul with unusual solemnity when we are closing up another year of our accounts for Eternity, and entering upon a new year of our eternal accountability. The Dresser of the Vineyard is going about among us, and watching us, and marking us. Methinks we may see him laying down his axe at the root of this and that fruitless tree. With what mournful tenderness does he regard its barren and unsightly branches! If thou hadst but known, even thou, in this, the day of thy visitation, the things that belong to thy peace! Of many a tree the Lord of the Vineyard has said: Only one year more. Of many a tree this was said *last* year; and every day of *this* year there will be some trees cut down, of which the one year more of careful, kindly digging and manuring and watering, has come to its close without fruit. Only one year more! Of some it may be said: Only one month more of *that* year; and this month of January may be to you that one month only more. But this month of January, though it be the winter month of nature, may be to you the spring month of grace; and though it *may* be the last month of your life, the closing month in the final year of God's waiting upon you in mercy, yet, if you will now set about the work, it may be to you the month of Christian life, of springing blossoms, and of ripening fruits; and ere it closes, the Dresser of the Vineyard may joyfully say: "Lord, it is done as thou hast commanded; and lo! here is the fruit." And then the tree shall not be cut down for the fire, but transplanted, with all its heavenly life and beauty, to flourish in the paradise of God!

But I say, if you will *now* set about the work; and if this *should*

be the last month in your last year, you have not an hour to lose. If this should be your last month, and if you find yourself wasting its first sabbath, entering upon, and getting advanced in its first week, without sorrow for sin, without prayer for the Divine Mercy, without looking to Christ, without flying to Him, and crying every day, "Lord, save me, I perish!" then there is scarcely any more probability that the Christian life will begin with you in this month, than there is that in the midst of the frost and snow in which all nature is locked up around you, there will open the softness of spring, and the tender grass and flowers of summer, and the ripening harvests of autumn; for it cannot but be that much depends on the manner in which you begin this opening month. The first sabbath in it may be the very dividing line between hope and hopelessness, between the possibility of salvation and the certainty of endless ruin. It may be the sabbath that contains the germ of your eternal destiny!

This may be the case, even if God should give you a year more; if this, instead of being the last month in your last year, should be the first month in one year more of God's kindly care about you. The first sabbath and the first week may contain the prediction of your last. Oh, then, close it not without God, and spend not another day in the heedless, prayerless, unrepentant manner in which you may have commenced it. Call home your thoughts, and fix them on the great decision. Go, though for the first time, perhaps, in all your life, to Jesus Christ in secret, and begin this year of sabbaths with sorrow for sin, with prayer for mercy, with faith and hope in your Divine Redeemer.

How happy for you, if this should be the case! and how happy the lot of the Christian who this year begins a new year for God! He looks back upon the past, he sees where God's tender mercy was at work upon him, pruning him, stirring up the earth about his roots. He remembers this and that special mercy. It was God's discipline of love, and, like that of suffering and sorrow, too costly to be wasted. He remembers this and that sore trial. That also was God's discipline of love. The Dresser of the Vineyard was there, purging the tree, that it might bring forth more fruit. The trials of the year have been messengers of love and not of wrath. And have they gained their end? Is there now more fruit? Is the soul brought nearer to God, and has it made a delightful and manifest advance in holiness toward heaven? Is there more of the spirit of adoption, more of humility, a deeper and more constant sense of dependence upon Christ, a more settled and decisive habit of daily watchfulness and prayer? Is there more of self-denying benevolence, a more constant habit of seeking others' good, a truer love to souls, a deeper, more fervent desire for the spread of the Redeemer's kingdom, a better practical effort to make others partakers of the grace of Christ? Is there more of the spirit of kindness and gentleness and tenderness in intercourse with others? Is there less of the spirit of the world, and more of the

spirit of heaven? Are *all* the fruits of the spirit more abundant, under another year of the gracious discipline of God? Is the heart's hold on the world less firm and tenacious, and its hold on heaven firmer, stronger? Are its affections more set upon "the things that are above," and less fondly cleaving to, less occupied by, the things of earth? As the soul gets nearer to heaven by a year, do the pursuits of heaven, and the spirit of heaven, more manifestly occupy the soul?

These are questions of self-examination, as we set out on a New Year, most salutary in their tendency, and important to be faithfully answered. How long God will continue his precious disciplinary work upon us, no man for himself can tell. This only a man knows, that the more of the fruits of the Spirit there are in his heart and habits, the nearer he is to heaven, the more surely and brightly the seal of his Redeemer is set and shining upon him. He belongs to God, and every day is a step into God's blissful presence. But if, under God's discipline, a man be not growing in his likeness, then every step in which, by the flight of time, he advances nearer to God, carries him farther from heaven. Time carries him to God, but character and destiny mark him as the fruitless withered tree to be burned. In the record of God's wasted mercies, you may see, as plainly written upon his habits, as if it were carved upon the bark of a dead tree in the vineyard: *For the fire.*

The season is a precious one, with its voices of solemnity as well as of cheerfulness, its lessons of instruction and gratitude. Much depends in our Christian course this year on the manner in which we commence it. A man may set out with new vigor in his heavenly race, and may fill up every day of this year with such devotedness to Christ, that it shall constitute the year of all years for grateful recollections, and praises, and eternity. The beginning is everything. The first Sabbath is, as it were, the corner-stone of this year's temple of life. Let it be laid in grace, let Christ be the foundation, and every stone that is laid afterward, every successive day's additions will be connected with Him, sacred to Him, built for his praise. The first Sabbath in a man's new year is generally as a bud, containing the germ and prediction of all the leaves that are to unfold from it. If there be evil habits, if there be neglect of prayer, if there be the omission of God's word, in the first Sabbath and the first week, do not these evil things almost always run through the whole year, like threads of death in the warp of life which God is weaving?

Let a man take good care of his first Sabbath, and the first Sabbath will be likely to take care of all the year. Let a man begin it with Christ, and go through it as if he were unrolling a prophecy of his character and habits, his trains of thought and feeling, his spirit of prayer, his dependence on divine grace, his religious habits in every way. If an angel should say to a man in the morning: "This day will be the type of all your year, and I am commissioned to warn you of it, for every week and every day hereafter will be

woven out of the threads of feeling and of action you fasten to this day;" with what care and solemn earnestness would such a man spend that Sabbath! How much of holy joy would he wish to concentrate in it, in what pleadings with God would he pour out his soul, how much would he strive to experience of the preciousness of Christ, what humble contrition for sin would he labor after, how would he endeavor to make the day a foretaste, or at least a gate, of Heaven, and what labors of benevolence and love would he put in fervid motion, what desires and efforts for the advancement of his Redeemer's kingdom! At the very least, with what care would he keep at the foot of the cross, striving to have his Saviour's strength made perfect in his own weakness!

Well! the first Sabbath *is* a prediction. Its tone generally speaks through the first week, its character colors the first week, and the first week ordinarily governs the year. Now, how solemn is this consideration. A man stands, as it were, at the loom of life, and ties the threads, and arranges the figures of the tapestry to be woven, and you will see that every day and week, as the shuttle flies and the piece grows, only shows what the man put in at first. Such are our habits. Every one of them has its seed, with the tree in miniature. And as every seed is a prediction, so is every habit. If then you wish for a happy New Year, put you the seeds of happiness into its first Sabbath and its first week. Put them in carefully, as if you were burying a precious charge for the resurrection. Put them in with much prayer, and, if you choose, with many tears, which are as good as a gentle rain in seed-time, and God will take care of them, and make them grow. So your Sabbath shall guide your week, and your week shall predict your year, and your happy year—happy, because holy; happy, because God is in it—shall be full of blessedness and praise as an anthem.

Let me bring it to God (a man should say) beforehand. Let me begin it for Christ, as I would have him end it. Lord, take *thou* the threads of my new life, and fasten and arrange them! None else can do it safely, and if thou do it not, Satan will be the weaver. Lord, let me live one year at least for thee! Every day, as thou renewest my life, renew *thy* life in my heart, and keep it clean and holy.

Death is still working like a mole,
And digs my grave at each remove;
Let grace work too, and on my soul
Drop from above.

Sin is still hammering my heart
Unto a hardness void of love;
Let suppling grace, to cross his art,
Drop from above.

III. THE YEAR JUST CLOSED.

We spend our years as a tale that is told, Ps. xc. 9., said David, some three thousand years ago, and time has not paused in his

[illegible] The [illegible] of years teaches a most solemn [illegible] points them to eternity. [illegible] Time has driven his swift [illegible] in life's journey. We [illegible] of months and years [illegible] take note of latitude or [illegible] and well to pause, if we [illegible] past, and form stronger [illegible] for the future. But [illegible] His car-wheels roll on [illegible] or sleep. He hurries on [illegible] to the last depot in life's journey.

He who would [illegible] in the light of years, has ample material for meditation. We may mourn our neglects, and sigh over our wasted or misspent hours, but time never drives his car backward. The past is beyond recall. Even while we resolve and reresolve to be wiser for the future, the car-bell may ring and toll the end of our journey. Time stamps his passengers by the way-side rapidly and profusely, yet few are aware when their own turn is to come, till they find themselves dropped in a moment, and prostrate in their last resting-place.

Thus suddenly do men end moral life. A feeling of sadness is excited by the end of almost everything. The end of life, the end of time, the end of all things, are solemn thoughts. It may, indeed seem trite and commonplace to moralize on the closing year; but it is not commonplace to die—to meet one's last hour on earth—to come to life's last mysterious boundary—to close up all concerns with earth, and have done with time, when the dislodged and immortal spirit shall be summoned to stretch its wings for the final flight. And yet the solemn end of life—the end of probation rapidly approaches to each and to all.

The last suns of another year have gone down for ever. Its day is spent, and its bright sun-light has faded into the darkness of by-gone ages. The year just closed has been to millions of our sinful race the end of life—the end of probation, and the closing up of their moral histories as prisoners of hope in a world of mercy. These millions have changed worlds, changed their modes of existence, gone to people eternity and swell the myriads that are assembling for the great day of judgment. What emotions of unutterable joy or sorrow have heaved the bosoms of these dying millions, as they found themselves in Heaven or in hell. What joy to some to find "life's toilsome day over"—to find an end to sorrows and to sins—an end of doubts and fears—an end of trials and conflicts with enemies visible and invisible, within and without—to have escaped for ever beyond the temptations of an evil heart and the arch adversary of souls! What joy to find themselves across the broad river—beyond the dark valley, safe in the paradise of God.

But what unutterable anguish to others, to find life's brief journey ended—its probationary years all wasted—its privileges misimproved—its offers of mercy and salvation refused or neglected, and the door of hope and Heaven closed forever. They began the year in health and strength. The sun of life was up in mid Heaven. The afternoon of many years spread out in the distance, and it seemed a long journey to the grave. The glow of health mantled on their cheek. Hope sparkled in their eye. The rich blood coursed in crimson currents through their veins. They had much goods laid up in the store-house of hope for many years. But the scene suddenly changed. The curtain dropped. The bright visions of hope were dissolved and fled away. The sun went down at noon. The shadows of life's evening gathered suddenly over them. The lamp of life flickered in its socket and went out. The beating pulse stood still. Life's pendulum ceased its vibrations. The splendid machinery so fearfully and wonderfully made, suddenly collapsed. The warm currents became chilled in their courses and ceased to flow. The drama of life was over. Its brief story is told, and its history is recorded in the archives of eternity. But of the grand catastrophe of the soul ruined, abandoned of hope —lost, undone for ever—who shall depict the awful representation? That most fearful of all tragedies, the ruin of the soul, will be acted on the great stage of eternity, when the curtain of time shall rise and be rolled together as a scroll.

To that mysterious world—to that vast assembly—to that grand assize on the great day for which all other days were made, what multitudes have gone the past year! Gone unexpectedly—and some gone unprepared—gone to feel the keenest anguish and bitterest regrets, that life's golden hours and infinite privileges, so freely bestowed by an indulgent and long-suffering God, have been lost, and lost for ever! From that spirit-land, what voices of salutary admonition and warning come echoing back to these shores of time, to meet the crowd of travellers as they are hastening on to the world of retribution!

Dear reader! Listen to those still small voice as they whisper in solemn accents of the year—of the end of life—of invisible scenes, and the final judgment.

The days of the last year are numbered. They have gone before thee to bear their report to the recording angel, and to tell him how thou hast spent them—to what plans and purposes of good they have been devoted, and with what sincerity, and zeal, and solemn earnestness thou hast labored in thy work of preparation to meet God, and to accomplish life's great errand.

SECRET SUCCESS IN PREACHING.

Fletcher of Madely was one of the most earnest and successful of preachers. He was a man of prayer, much prayer, and herein

lay the secret of his power. His biographer tell us, that "his preaching was perpetually preceded, accompanied, and succeeded by prayer. Before he entered upon the performance of his duty, he requested of the great Master of Assemblies a subject adapted to the conditions of his people; earnestly soliciting for himself wisdom, utterance, and power; for them a serious frame, an unprejudiced mind, and a retentive heart. The necessary preparation for the profitable performance of his ministerial duties was of longer or shorter duration, according to his peculiar state at the time; and frequently he could form an accurate judgment of the effect that would be produced in public, by the languor or enlargement he had experienced in private. The spirit of prayer accompanied him from the closet to the pulpit; and while he was virtually employed in pressing the truth upon his hearers, he was inwardly engaged in pleading that last great promise of his unchangeable Lord, 'I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.' From the great congregation he again withdrew to his sacred retreat, there requesting in secret that a blessing might accompany his public labors, and that the seed which he had sown, being treasured up in honest and good hearts, might sooner or later become abundantly fruitful."

All good ministers of the Lord Jesus do thus seek the blessing of God before and after their pulpit labors. But there is a great difference in the degree of earnestness and fervor with which they seek, and of course a proportionate difference in the degree of blessing which they gain. Some knock loudly, others faintly; some strike once, twice, thrice, others seven times; some wrestle with tears, others are comparatively formal. There is no gift of Divine Grace more precious to a minister of Christ than a spirit of persevering fervency in prayer, no gift which he ought to seek more earnestly and to cultivate more assiduously. Oftentimes, perhaps, when he is laboring away upon his discourses, and thinks that this and that presentation of truth *must* be effectual, the good effect upon his hearers is owing more to his prayers than his sermons. A minister's prayers may be compared to the powder, by firing which the cannon-ball is sent upon its errand; without the prayers, his sermons will be little better than a heap of cannon-balls without powder. There must be prayer from a heart on fire.

Some sermons are like a bright artillery-piece for a model: all finished, burnished, shining; everybody says, "What a splendid piece of ordnance!" People stand and look into its mouth, and measure its breech, and lift the ball it can carry, and admire it without fear, for there is no powder in it. It is not meant to shoot any person, but to attract admiration as a finished piece of ordnance. An elaborate model-sermon, without prayer, is a gun that a man might put his ear to the muzzle of without fear. And some sermons are like the artillery-pieces that are wheeled into line in a *sham-fight*, and fired with blank cartridges. There must be both powder and ball, if execution is to be done. Above all things, there must be much prayer. There must be prayer on fire.—*Dr. Cheever.*

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SERMON CCCCXV.

THE OLD AGE OF PIETY.

Preached in the First Church, New-Haven, on the 12th of October, 1845; the Lord's Day after the decease of Mrs. Mary Dwight, widow of President Dwight.

BY REV. LEONARD BACON, D. D.;
PASTOR OF THE FIRST CHURCH IN NEW-HAVEN, CONN.

Psalm xcii: 14. "They shall still bring forth fruit in old age."

The text is spoken of the righteous, in a poetical figure in which the righteous—that is, they who trust in God and love Him—are compared, as in the first Psalm, with a tree which strikes its roots deep into the ground, and is continually refreshed with living springs.

> "The righteous shall flourish like the palm-tree;
> He shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon.
> Those that are planted in the house of the Lord
> Shall flourish in the courts of our God.
> They shall bring forth fruit in old age,
> They shall be vigorous and flourishing;
> To show that the Lord is upright:
> He is my rock, and there is no unrighteousness in Him!"

The point on which the Psalmist in this passage fixes, as he contemplates the blessedness of God's own children, is the beauty and happiness of their old age. The court or open area in the center of an eastern dwelling, and especially the court of any great and stately dwelling, was often adorned with a tree, or sometimes with more than one, for beauty, for shade, and, as it might be, for fruit. There sometimes the palm-tree, planted by the cool fountain, shot up its tall trunk toward the sky, and waved its green top, far above the roof, in the sun-light and the breeze. There sometimes the olive, transplanted from the rocky hill-side, may have flourished under the protection and culture of the household, and may have rewarded their care with the rich abundance of its nutritious berries. With such images in his mind, the Psalmist, having spoken of the brief prosperity of the wicked, and having compared it with the springing and flourishing of the grass, which grows to its little height only to be immediately cut down, naturally and beautifully compares the righteous, not with the deciduous herbage, but with

the hardy tree that lives on through the summer's drought and the winter's storms, and from season to season still renews its growth. These trees of righteousness, as the poet conceives of them, are "planted in the house of the Lord:" they stand fair and "flowering in the courts of our God"—even "in old age they bring forth fruit"—they are "full of sap and flourishing"—they are living memorials "to show that the Lord is faithful," and that those who trust in Him shall never be confounded.

The subject of thought, then, to which the text invites us, is *the old age of piety*, as distinguished from the old age of the worldling. It may be profitable to us all, to fix our thoughts a few moments on this theme—the old age of the believer. What is it? Wherein consists its beauty, its usefulness, its happiness? Wherein is it unlike the old age of those who have lived and are living without God in the world?

1. The old age of the Christian is the old age of a life of *faith* and of *communion with God*. Faith, the principle which lays hold on things unseen, and makes them realities to the soul, is from first to last one grand characteristic that distinguishes the righteous, as the Psalmist here calls them, from the ungodly. They walk by faith, looking upon things not as they appear to the eye of sense and groveling selfishness, but as they appear in the light of God's truth; and in so doing, they walk with God, and there is communion of thought and affection between their mind and the mind of God. Thus their path is as the shining light that shineth more and more to the perfect day. They are making progress in faith and in communion with God, not only during the period of youth and of maturity, while the powers of mere nature are still unfolding and strengthening, but afterward, amid the infirmities of decaying nature, even to the close of life. The good man's judgment may begin to fail—his imagination may fail—his active energy for one work and another may fail, but his faith fails not, and the charity—the holy love—which is communion with God, "never faileth." The ungodly, on the other hand, the men of this world, look only at the things of this world, the things that are seen, the things that pertain exclusively to time. Of God and his government, of Heaven and hell, of eternity, of sin, and of salvation from the curse and power of sin, they habitually take no cognizance. Such things enter very little into their thoughts, and have no place in their plans and calculations. And as they grow old, and the powers of nature begin slowly and successively to break and fail, how melancholy is the sight to any thoughful beholder. How painful is it to see them, while the things of this life and this world are so soon to disappear for ever from their view, and while the thin bleached hair, the dimmed eye, the wrinkled countenance, the trembling and skinny hand, the stooping frame, and the tottering step, are so many tokens of the end—how revolting is it to a thoughtful mind to see them still caring for nothing and thinking of nothing but these transient and unreal interests. How painful to see an old man, upon whose path the lengthening shadows from life's

sunset fall dark and heavy, while yet he has no devout conciousness, no serious habitual sense of his relations to the vast unseen; an old man whose decaying powers announce the approach of death and the nearness of eternity; but who can resist and counteract the growing apathy of age, only as he persists in vexing himself with worldly cares, still scheming and scrambling to add a little more to the accumulations which he must leave so soon. How unlike to this, how beautiful in the comparison, is the old age of the believer—an old age of faith. How tranquil and heavenly the light that, amid the shadows of departing time, beams on the believing mind. Think of such a mind, full of matured and steadfast trust in God, long conversant with God and with eternity, rich in thoughts and affections that stretch beyond the bounds of earth and time, calmly reposing on the reality of things not seen, assured that God's design of love shall be accomplished on earth and in Heaven; —how beautiful is the triumph of grace over the decay of nature!

2. The old age of the Christian, as distinguished from the old age of the ungodly, is characterized by *hope*. Faith is the substance of things hoped for, as well as the evidence of things not seen. The language of faith is, I know in whom I have believed, and that He is able to keep that which I have committed to Him against that day. The believing mind, believing in God as He has revealed Himself in the Gospel, believing in things unseen and eternal, as those things eternal are manifested in the light of Christ's atoning cross; cannot but hope, for that mind knows and is assured that the Judge of all the earth will do right, and will cause all things to work together for good to them that love Him. In regard to the things of this life, the things that are seen and are temporal, the things which the men of this world live for, youth is the period of expectation. But as old age comes on, the illusion which young imagination threw over the future of time gradually disappears. To the aged, the glory and the bloom of this life are no more; and if this life is all to them—if they are without God in the world—if they have no hope within the veil, no inspiring consciousness of august and blessed relations to God and to eternity, what have they to hope for? Between them and that gloomy depth there lies the grave, only a dark, cold, arid remnant of existence, over which imagination itself, now languid and decaying, can spread no light nor bloom for hope to live upon. The aged unbeliever, without God in the world; the aged worldling, to whom, in his selfishness, his own plans are everything, and God's plans nothing—what is there in the world to come that he can hope for? What in this world that he can leave in God's hands with the hope that God will care for it? If he has property, he can make his will and appoint his executors, and amuse himself with turning his houses and lands into ready money, as if to take it with him, and he can build him a sepulcher, and give orders for his grave-clothes and his coffin; but what more? When all this is done, which way shall he look? But how different is it with the aged believer! To him, indeed,

as to others, old age is the evening of life, its dim light still fading into darkness. But to him faith opens a vista, through which the soul looks forth in hope beyond the deepening shadows around him. Nor is earth itself dark to him as it is dark to the ungodly. That which the grace of God has long ago taught him to regard as the highest of all interests here—the great cause of God and of the world's recovery from the curse of man's apostacy—that great work, more important in his affections than any transient and selfish interest of his own, is not dependent on him. Much as he has cared for it and prayed for it, much as he has denied himself and labored in its behalf, he knows that it fails not when his powers fail, nor dies when he dies. The decay of nature, then, brings to him no decay of hope in regard to the great object for which he has been living. His old age is an old age of hope.

3. The old age of the believer is an old age of *cheerfulness.* In the gradual decay of the various bodily powers, in the dim eclipse which slowly comes upon the faculties of the mind, in the conciousness of a steady and resistless approach toward the utmost boundary of the term of human life, there are influences constantly operating to produce depression of spirits. And when the old man begins to find that he is old, by feeling that he is not what he once was, and that others are more sensible of it than he is himself; when he finds himself no longer called on, as he once was, for the various services and duties of active life; when he finds himself crowded, as it were, off the stage by the men of a younger generation; there is in all this a strong tendency to an unhappy and irritable habit of mind. The old man, unless grace sustains him when nature decays, is in great danger of becoming discontented, querulous and morose, and of thinking that in proportion as he grows old, all around him grows worse. And it is not by any mere appeal to conscience, it is not by the mere force of prohibition and censure, marking and declaring the wickedness of the thing, that these tendencies to depression, and discontent, and querulousness, are to be effectually resisted. They must be counteracted by a living force within. That counteracting force the believer experiences in the power of faith and in the grace of God that dwells within him. Faith surrounds him with the calm excitement of great and glorious realities; realities that grow nearer and brighter to his mind as the world of sense and time grows dim with age. Hope, leaning upon the love and power of God, and looking forth toward Heaven, raises him above the depressing influences of infirmity and decay. His habitual communion with God, the sympathy of his mind with the plans and movements of Almighty goodness, and the various effects which a long continued course of gracious self-discipline has wrought upon his soul, enable him to resist the tendency to discontent and moroseness which beset him in the gradual failure of the powers of nature. How beautiful is an unrepining, bright, cheerful old age! How doubly beautiful when that calm, bright cheerfulness, lighting up the evening of life, is caught from Heaven, and is none other than the cheerfulness of a mind at peace

with God and in communion with his boundless blessedness. How often do we see something of this, if not the full reality, in the old age of piety!

4. The old age of the Christian, as distinguished from that of the ungodly, is characterized by *affection*. There is ordinarily in extreme age a tendency to apathy, an unmoved lethargic state of the sensibilities, in which the affections, sharing in the common decay of nature, wither and dwindle away. The old man's sympathies with those around him are less easily awakened than they once were; and, as he grows older, he feels less and less interest in any of his friends, save those who happen to be essential to his comfort. Of course, the Christian in his old age is not exempted from this tendency. Extreme age has the same effect on his sensibilities as on the sensibilities of other men, and he, as the process of decay goes on, may lose the warmth of his interest in those around him, and even in the dearest of his friends. But in his case there is a counteracting power. His faith and hope, the habitual cheerfulness of his spirit, and the communion of his soul with the infinite love of God, are like a constant cordial to his nature, that keeps his mind elastic, and quickens all his better sympathies. His sense of having almost done with life does not diminish his interest in man, for he sees in man a partaker of eternity. He does not lose his interest in the Church of God, for that he cannot lose till faith and hope are dead. He does not lose his interest in those near to him by the ties of nature, for while mind and memory remain, and he knows the names of the faces of those that love him, he knows them in their relations to eternity and to the Savior. Thus, if his mental faculties are not utterly obscured, he lives on, believing, hoping, cheerful, and loving to the end.

5. Thus it comes to pass that the old age of the Christian is characterized to the last by *usefulness*. The old man, too old for activity and labor, what is he worth to his friends or to the world, if he is without godliness, and, consequently, without those effects of godliness upon the character of old age which we have been tracing out. Of what use is he, save as in God's providence, he is the passive instrument of admonishing others of their frailty and mortality, and of the guilt and danger of living and dying without God? But how many ways does God find to make his children, amid the infirmities of declining age, useful to others. They shall bring forth fruit in old age, to show that God is faithful to them that trust in Him. How persuasive is the testimony which they give for God and for godliness, out of their long experience! How winning are their words of counsel and of invitation! How attractive is the sight of the faith and hope, the cheerfulness and love, with which they wait all the days of their appointed time till their change comes! How touching, and how valuable beyond its intrinsic efficacy, is every little act of duty or affection put forth by their enfeebled and decaying powers! To the last, they shine as lights in the world, holding forth the word of life. And when that light, glimmering no more below, has been transferred to shed a

clearer radiance from a higher sphere, how does their blessed memory linger upon earth to draw survivors after them.

It now remains for us to make some more direct application of the train of thought into which our contemplation of the text has led us.

1. The consideration of the beauty and happiness of piety in old age, is an argument to the young to remember their Creator in the days of their youth. There is no young person here so profane or so thoughtless as not to see that piety in old age is venerable, and beautiful, and happy. Why is it so? Why is the character of the aged believer any more to be respected, or his state any more to be desired, than the character and the state of the aged worldling? I can tell you. Piety, that is repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ; piety, that is the love and service of God with the whole heart; is a reasonable thing, a right thing, and therefore it is beautiful and happy. It is, in old or young, the very highest form of human character. It is the crown of human nature. Without it, man, whatever else he may have, is a degraded, blighted, wretched creature, shorn of his glory, and wandering into the blackness of darkness for ever. With it, man, though weary, and faint, and weeping, though compassed about with infirmity, and crushed with burthens, and soiled with the dust of labor and of conflict, and only in part delivered from the debasement of a fallen nature, is an angel of God, struggling upward and soon to be free in the purity and light of Heaven. It is this, and nothing else than this, that makes piety seem so venerable, so beautiful and so happy in old age. If you did not know this, you would see no reason, and feel none, why an old man on the verge of time, whose last sands of life are falling, might not as well be an ungodly worldling as a believer. Knowing this, you hope that your old age, if ever you live to be old, will be the old age of piety. Tell us, then, ought you not now remember your Creator in the days of your youth, before the evil days come, when the vigor and the joyousness, the activity and the liveliness of life are over, and the years draw nigh—those years of decrepitude and weariness, of dimness and decay—in the which you will say I have no pleasure in them. O! how rarely can you find an aged Christian—one to whom the hoary head is indeed a crown of glory—who was not in his early days a believer, a penitent, a follower of Christ, a child of God. What madness is it on your part if you do not choose and seek that one thing, without which life is all vanity and guilt before God, and death is death eternal.

2. Our subject addresses itself powerfully to those who are old, or are growing old, without piety. Is there here one aged person, man or woman, that is living without God, living for this world alone, living without repentance, living without hope? O! what a night is that which is gathering around you! Let me entreat you, then, to think of these things before, in the progress of infirmity, it shall be too late for thought—nay, before death shall close the period of probation and seal your destiny! Let me entreat you to

ask yourself whether you may not now turn to God, and find, at this last hour, that the blood of Christ cleanseth from all sin!

3. The subject we have been considering should lead us all to a grateful acknowledgment of the grace of God in the examples, which we are permitted to see, of aged and venerable piety.

One such example has been, within the past week, removed from this church, we doubt not, to the General Assembly and Church of the First Born. To dwell for a moment on some notices of her long life, and on the remembrance of her humble and retiring but attractive piety, is only an imperfect acknowledgment of the grace of God in her, and may be profitable to us as a closing illustration of our subject.

The venerable widow, Mary Dwight, who died on the morning of the last Lord's day, was born at Dosoris, Long Island, on the 11th of April, 1754—a century ago, lacking only eight years and a half.* Sixty-eight years ago, at the age of 23, she was married, and entered upon domestic life as the wife of one who was devoted to the service of God in the ministry of the gospel. Her husband was, for the first year after their marriage, a chaplain in the army of the revolution—in consideration of which she received for a few of the last years of her life, a pension as the widow of a revolutionary officer. At the end of that year, her position in life was suddenly changed. Her husband was recalled from that public employment by the death of his father, and was made, in the providence of God, the temporary head of the bereaved family, his widowed mother and his brothers and sisters looking to him for protection and aid. Thus, for five years, they resided at Northampton, in his mother's family; he, meanwhile, burthened with secular cares and labors, preaching in vacant congregations, and employing his great and peculiar talents as a teacher, and she, in all this, his comfort, his joy, and his help. Then came another change, and for twelve years her husband was the pastor of the church at Greenfield, in this State, and, at the same time, the head of a private but large and flourishing institution for the education of youth. Thus, from a very early period of life, her position was continually one of great responsibility, at once conspicuous, and laborious, and requiring an uncommon combination of qualities in the mind and in the heart. In the year 1795, Dr. Dwight became as you all know, the President of Yale College, in which office he served for twenty-three years. What his labors and cares were in that station, and what share of them naturally and necessarily devolved upon her, I need not attempt to describe. In 1817, at the age of 63, after forty years of happy wedded life, she became a widow, and retired to be an inmate in the dwelling of her eldest son, where she continued till her death—more than twenty-eight years. That house to which she withdrew in her old age, to spend, as she supposed, the little evening of her life, has been her home

* She was the daughter of Benjamin Woolsey, Esq.; between whom and the father of President Dwight there was an intimacy, begun when they were classmates and roommates at college, and continued to the close of life.

for a longer period than any other house that she ever called her home.

In attempting, not a delineation of her character, but a brief notice of some of its most interesting and instructive traits, it is most obvious to remark that she has been, through life, so far as any of the living generation are able to testify, a beautiful example of conscientious fidelity in all the duties that belonged to her sex, her relations and her station in society. The heart of her husband trusted in her. Her children rise up and call her blessed. Her children's children honor her, and, to the close of her life, they delighted to do her reverence. She contributed all that belonged to her part toward augmenting the attractiveness of that hospitality which made her husband's home the resort of friends and of strangers. She was the friend of the poor, and especially like a mother to the poor young man aspiring to the pursuit of knowledge and to the service of God in the ministry.* Her gentleness and kindness taught all to love her, her uniform and graceful dignity constrained all to regard her with the deference appropriate to her character and station. Her prudence and skill in the management of her household affairs, and her habits of economy and industry, relieved her husband of many cares that might otherwise have withdrawn him in part, at least, from those great public duties to which he was called of God.

It is equally to be remarked, for the remark is essential to a just conception of the symmetry and beauty of her character, that she was never found wandering from her proper sphere. Such was her instinctive feminine sense of propriety, that while she never withdrew from any responsibilities that belonged to her position and relations, she had no ambition, no uneasiness of disposition, no passion for conspicuity, leading her away from her appropriate duties to attempt those things which God had not given her to do. This is the more worthy to be noticed as it was manifestly no small part of the loveliness and dignity which adorned her, and by which she adorned her station.

Her meekness, her humble self-distrust, her jealousy against self-deception was another noticeable trait of her character. She never thought of herself, in any respect, and least of all in respect to her own piety, more highly than she ought to think. Her religious experience being from first to last without any of those strongly-marked crises which sometimes give distinctness and assurance to the consciousness of reconciliation with God, she was never able to refer to any precise period as to the date of her renewal by the Holy Spirit. Thus under the influence of a timidity which was, no doubt, in this particular, excessive, she was prevented from making a public profession of her trust in the Savior till after the death of her husband, when, in the year 1819, she was received

* Many who are now eminently and widely useful in the Church, remember with grateful affection her maternal kindness as First Manager of the "Female Education Society," an association of ladies which has been for thirty years employed in helping on their way to usefulness pious and dependent young men in Yale College.

into covenant with this church on the profession of her faith. Since that period, not only has her religious character been more distinctly developed to her friends and to the world, but her decision and purpose to be on the Lord's side, and her affectionate though trembling confidence in Christ as her Redeemer, have been more clearly manifested to her own consciousness. Yet to the last she has had continually, as those who knew her could see without her taking pains to tell of it, a very low opinion of her own piety.

Yet we need not hesitate to say that her character was marked distinctly by faith as the apprehension of things not seen, and in particular by a trust in God's promises. I cannot doubt that it was by this, in part, that her characteristic cheerfulness and affectionateness were kept up so remarkably to the end of her long life. She had a strong and child-like belief in the efficacy of prayer—often asking her Christian friends with great simplicity to pray for her; and whenever her children, in the last years of her life, were brought together from their several distant homes, she was always unwilling that they should part without uniting in a family prayer-meeting. How much she loved the Holy Scriptures; her own Bible, devoutly read day by day through a long series of years, is a witness. One of the special comforts of the last two or three years of her life, after her sight had grown very dim, was a beautiful English copy of the New Testament, with the book of Psalms, in an uncommonly large type, which was presented to her by a clerical friend, and which she read through again and again in her devotions, when other books had become quite illegible. There were favorite promises from the Holy Book which she loved to recall; and, in particular, that beautiful expression of God's care and love, "Even to your old age I am He, and even to hoar hairs will I carry you," was often upon her lips. In like manner, she had her favorite hymns, expressive of trust in God; and sweet hymns were always the dearer to her because her mind, by nature and by culture, from her childhood up, delighted in poetry. One of the latest utterances from her lips, when death was already coming upon her, was the repetition of that beautiful psalm which was sung before the commencement of this discourse. It was on Saturday, just at evening, about twelve hours before she breathed her last. Her daughter-in-law, at her bed-side, repeated to her the hymn:

"How firm a foundation ye saints of the Lord,"

for that was a favorite with her, and then began the psalm:

"Up to the hills I lift mine eyes;"

but she herself immediately caught the words from her daughter's lips, and repeated the psalm to the close. In such a filial faith toward God she died, gently and fearlessly falling asleep, though all her lifetime she had shrunk from the thought of death with a constitutional timidity. On the morning of the day preceding her dissolution, she said to her daughter-in-law: "I think I shall die to-day." "And are you not willing and ready to die?" was the answer. "Yes," she said, "I trust I am ready." Thus the grace

on which she rested humbly and tremblingly, was sufficient for her to the end. She was ready, and God has taken her.

Yes; God has taken her, we cannot doubt, to the great reunion of his people in the presence of their Savior and in the participation of his glory. And with this thought, we return to complete our illustration of the subject of this discourse. It is one of the felicities of the Christian in old age that, though death has parted him from so many of those nearest and dearest friends who were God's friends as well as his, death shall soon bring him again to their blessed society. The aged disciple of whom I have been speaking, has borne, meekly and patiently, the sorrow of many a sad parting. But God has been her refuge in grief, and He who is the dwelling-place of his people in all generations, is now her dwelling-place for ever. When her husband died, and the grief was not hers and her children's only, but the general grief of the college, the city, the State, and the Church, she said to one who was writing to communicate the tidings to an absent son: "Say to him, shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" Those who part in such a temper, leaning in their grief upon God, may have it among their consolations that, though death divides them for a season, death shall come again, in God's good time, to reunite them where partings are unknown, and where sorrow and sighing flee away."

PSALM 121.

DIVINE PROTECTION.

Up to the hills I lift mine eyes,
Th' eternal hills beyond the skies;
Thence all her help my soul derives;
There my almighty refuge lives.

He lives; the everlasting God,
That built the world, that spread the flood;
The heavens with all their hosts He made,
And the dark regions of the dead.

He guides our feet, He guards our way;
His morning smiles bless all the day:
He spreads the evening veil, and keeps
The silent hours, while Israel sleeps.

Israel, a name divinely blest,
May rise secure, securely rest;
The holy Guardian's wakeful eyes
Admit no slumber, nor surprise.

No sun shall smite thy head by day;
Nor the pale moon with sickly ray
Shall blast thy couch; no baleful star
Dart his malignant fire so far.

Should earth and hell with malice burn,
Still thou shalt go and still return,
Safe in the Lord; his heavenly care
Defends thy life from every snare.

On thee foul spirits have no power;
And, in thy last departing hour,
Angels, that trace the airy road,
Shall bear thee homeward to thy God.

SERMON CCCCXVI.

THE DEATH OF THE RIGHTEOUS A CAUSE FOR LAMENTATION.

A DISCOURSE delivered December 9, 1845, at the funeral of the Hon. John Cotton Smith, President of the American Bible Society.

BY REV. GROVE L. BROWNELL,
PASTOR OF THE CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH OF SHARON, CONN.

1 SAMUEL XXV: 1. "And Samuel died: and all the Israelites were gathered ogether, and lamented him, and buried him in his house at Ramah."

WE may prize a blessing while we have it in our possession, but we may not estimate it according to its real value until we are deprived of it by a wise and holy Providence. This is too often true in relation to those distinguished members of the human family whom God has raised up to bless the Church and the world. We have an affecting illustration of this in the case of the subject of our text. He was eminently instrumental in advancing both the temporal and spiritual interests of the nation of Israel: but it is evident from sacred record, that they did not duly estimate his worth, until he was removed from them by the hand of death. Then they more fully realized the excellence of his character and the extent of his usefulness among them. Then they sincerely and deeply lamented him, and deplored the loss they were called to sustain in his removal. All Israel were gathered together to weep over him, and to bury him in his house or prepared tomb, at Ramah: and their conduct on this occasion, as all will admit, was proper. His personal merits and his former public services, rendered this general expression of respect to his name and memory a just debt, and it had been ungrateful to have withheld it.

It is right to mourn over our departed friends, when our grief is properly restricted. The simple act of lamenting them is not forbidden in the sacred writings. It is, indeed, sanctioned by the example of good men in former ages, and even by that of the Saviour of mankind. When the patriarch Jacob died, his son Joseph went up with chariots and horsemen in great numbers to bury him in the land of Canaan; and there he made a mourning for his father seven days. In view of the expressions of their sorrow, the Canaanites said: "This is a grievous mourning to the Egyptians!" When Aaron died, all the congregation of Israel mourned for him thirty days; and, during a like period, they wept for Moses in the plains of Moab. Devout men carried Stephen to his burial, and made great lamentation over him, and at the grave of his friend, Lazarus, Jesus wept; thence, to mourn, simply considered, is not inconsistent with any principle or duty of the Christian syster Christianity, instead of rendering us insensible to the worth of ou

virtuous friends, teaches us to value them more highly. Instead of suppressing the rising sigh and the gathering tear over their pillow of death, and over their grave, she bids them come forth to recall the deep and hidden emotions of the soul to the honor of her blessed name. Instead of weakening, it adds new strength to natural affection, when the heart is imbued with the spirit of truth and grace. It is the merciful design of our Heavenly Father that we should feel afflicted by the removal of our friends into eternity. Their death is his voice of admonition—his rod of correction, by means of which we are made partakers of his holiness.

In the providence of God, a great and a good man has fallen in the midst of us; one, who, like Samuel, has been a ruler and judge in the land, and an able and faithful advocate of the truth and cause of God; and, like Israel of old, we are now assembled to lament and bury him.

I am prompted by the words of the text and by the occasion which has convened us, to state and explain some of the principal reasons why we should lament the removal of the pious and useful members of the community.

1. When one who has been distinguished for his piety and usefulness is removed by death, it is a just cause for lamentation that so much moral excellence is taken from a sinful needy world.

I stand on this watch-tower in Zion and look around me, and my heart sickens and almost dies within me when I see that there are so few among the many that bear any resemblance to the moral character of their Maker; hence, these few who exhibit some evidence of loyalty to Zion's King in their conformity to his will, are precious in my view; for their moral excellence constitutes the only true adornment of our fallen race—they are the light and glory of this lower creation. Extinguish these lights which the grace of God has created, and in what gross darkness the communities where they have shined would be inveloped.

How glorious the moral excellence of Noah, when viewed in contrast with the moral deformity of the thousands by whom he was surrounded. His soul was the only one on which the pure eye of Jehovah, running to and fro throughout that generation, could rest with any complacence. He was the only light to expose the darkness of idolatry, and to reprove the wickedness which prevailed around him. And so of Lot in Sodom. He only, among the thousands with whom he dwelt, reflected the bright beams of the sun of righteousness upon the surrounding darkness.

Were not these holy men a great blessing to the people of their generation? Would not their early removal have been a signal frown upon their contemporaries? Did not their existence among them serve to check the progress of vice and crime, and to delay the judgments of God's holy throne? The flood came not, the fiery shower was suspended until they were removed to a place of safety. And what was then the fate of the old world and of Sodom?

You may say, perhaps, that the case of these holy men was a peculiar one and that their removal would have been a greater

calamity than the removal of many of the righteous at the present day. Be it so: but, then, let me ask, when was there a time, from the fall of man to the present moment, that any of the excellent of the earth, in the judgment of the friends of God, could well be spared? In this age, and in this land even, so distinguished as it has been by revivals of religion, and by a consequent increase of the number of the Redeemer's friends, what place has more pious and faithful men than the necessities of Zion seem to demand? Where is the place in which the removal of one such person, though late in life, would not be a lamentable event in Providence? Where would they not have reason to cry: "Help, Lord, for the godly man ceaseth; for the faithful fail from among the children of men!" Heaven is, indeed, rendered more glorious by such accessions to its numbers; but earth looses its glory in the same proportion: and we have reason to be afflicted and to mourn when we see the amount of moral excellence thus diminished here below. Then why are we so insensible to our loss; why so unmoved when one is taken after another, in quick succession, from the struggling Church on earth?

2. When the righteous are removed by death, it is a just cause for lamentation that the exercise of so much benevolent feeling is lost to the surviving community.

Selfishness almost universally prevails as the ruling principle of action among the members of the human family. Indeed little, very little, of true benevolence is to be found on earth; and that little is of heavenly origin. They only who are born of God sincerely regard and strive to promote the best interests of their fellow-creatures. He who has imbibed the spirit of Christ is a friend to all, and desires their prosperity and happiness in regard to both their temporal and spiritual interests. He is prepared to rejoice with those that rejoice, and to weep with those that weep.

The removal of such a person by death, is, to the children of God, a just cause for lamentation. They will no more experience his sympathy in the trials and afflictions of their earthly pilgrimage. As they journey on to the gates of death through life's rugged path, his presence will cheer and encourage their hearts no more. He will assist them no more in their spiritual work by his faithful admonitions, by his heavenly counsels, and by his fervent prayers. No more will his friendly hand be extended to aid them in bearing their burdens. As children of God's grace, as members of the same spiritual family, as fellow-heirs of the kingdom of glory, he sincerely and ardently loved them, and he delighted in their society. He loved to meet them in the house of God, at the table of their common Lord, and at the appointed season for social prayer. But the exercise of such benevolent affection, which rendered him so dear to the saints below, qualified him for union and fellowship with the Church above: and to that higher sphere of usefulness and happiness God has called him, and they are now left to lament their loss in his removal.

But, if they who are heirs of eternal life—if they who are soon

to join the company of the redeemed in Heaven, have reason to lament when one of their number is removed by death, how much more reason have they to lament who are aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise, without God and without hope in the world? Who on this side of eternity realizes the worth of the immortal soul like him who is prepared to go up to glory? Who else has an affecting view of that eternal state of happiness beyond the grave? And who, but such a child of God, sincerely and ardently desires the salvation of the lost and perishing children of men?

Let my impenitent hearers make the case their own. You have no hope toward God, and you have no heart to seek the salvation of your soul: but there is one who compassionates your case as sinners—who desires, above all things, your immortal welfare: and that friend is a child of God, and has liberty of access to his throne of grace. He kindly admonishes you of your danger, and entreats you to turn and live; and you are convinced that his closet bears witness daily to his prayers and tears on your account. But he dies; and leaves you unreconciled to God. His admonitions and entreaties have now ceased for ever—he will weep and pray for you no more. In a case like this, would you not have cause to lament the removal of the man who made your immortal interests the object of his benevolent regard until his eyes were closed in death? Under the subduing and melting influence of such recollections as these, many among the impenitent have stood and wept over the graves of departed saints.

3. When the righteous are removed by death, it is a just cause for lamentation that the world is deprived of the salutary influence of their example.

Until the judgment shall reveal it, the extent of such influence cannot be fully known. It will then be clearly seen how many have been reproved and restrained in their course of iniquity by witnessing the godly example of the saints. Yes; it will then appear that many, very many, have been brought to repentance by this means. Great, indeed, must be the moral influence of the man who walks circumspectly before the world; who is an upright and consistent Christian every day; who is always seen in his place in the sanctuary; who is known to sanctify the sabbath, and to worship God in his family and in the closet; who has set his house in order; who exhibits convincing proof that his affections are set on things above, and who is evidently waiting for his summons to depart and be with Christ. When such persons are removed from the Church below, we have much reason to lament their absence. They have stood as pillars to support this heavenly building; they have contended earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints; they have assisted in maintaining the discipline of God's house; and they have fervently offered up their prayers to God for the prosperity of Zion. But their active usefulness in the Church below has now ceased, and they have gone up to a brighter and nobler sphere of action in glory and immortality.

Then, plainly, it is not on *their* account that we lament their death, but on account of the loss which the Church and the world sustain in their removal. Surely we have no reason to deplore the lot of one who sleeps in Jesus. It was infinite gain for him to die. Though we now see through a glass darkly, yet our present measure of knowledge of the blessedness and glory of the departed saint forbids us to exclaim: Alas! my brother; hard is the fate to be imprisoned in the tomb! Thy light of life is extinguished, and the night of death has shrouded thy once loved form in deep and perpetual gloom! Better, far better, had it been for thee to have lingered still longer with us on these mortal shores! No, we cannot thus lament over the grave of the pious dead. That blessed gospel which brings life and immortality to light, and which reveals the glorious inheritance of the saints in the future world, forbids it. Than such language, nothing could be more inappropriate to their case.

Consider for a moment the happy change which they have experienced, and you will realize their gain. Here, they may never have been clothed with the honors of office; but there they are kings and priests unto God and the Father. Here they may have possessed uncertain and unsatisfactory riches; but there they have an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled and unfading. Here below they were strangers and pilgrims, having no continuing city; but now they have gone home to that glorious city which God had prepared for them; they are fellow-citizens with the saints in the heavenly Zion. Here they dwelt in a frail, miserable tenement of clay; but now they have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. Here their vision of divine things was limited and obscure; but there they see God face to face; they see Jesus as he is, and behold with wonder and adoration the triumphs of his cross and the glories of his crown. How clear is their vision now, and how extensive their prospect of eternal things. Here they were disquieted with doubts and fears respecting the final trial of their faith; but these have passed away like the momentary causeless anxieties and imaginary dangers of a dream. They have awaked in eternity, and are safe. They feared the swellings of Jordan; but they have stemmed and passed that flood, and entered joyfully the land of promise—the Heavenly Canaan. They have met the last enemy, and have conquered; yea, they are more than conqueror's through Him that hath loved them. Here, in this vale of tears, they once sorrowed and wept; but now the days of their mourning are ended, and their tears are wiped away; their sorrow is turned into joy—into *fulness* of joy and pleasures for evermore.

But shall we here turn away our thoughts from those who are put in possession of this rich inheritance—of this glorious and unfading crown? No: in imagination we pursue after them as they go on gaining new accessions of knowledge and happiness, and rising from one degree of glory to another. The highest seraph in Heaven, were his greatness and glory fully displayed to our view, would appear to us like a god; and, like John in Patmos, we should

be tempted to fall down and worship at his feet. But the period in eternity will soon arrive when they who have just entered the heavenly world will have so far surpassed the present attainments of that highest seraph in knowledge, happiness and glory, as *his* now surpasses theirs. And they will yet hold on their glorious career without arriving at a final period in their progress: and never, at any stage, will it be possible for them to conceive what further accessions of knowledge, felicity and glory are still reserved for them! Can we, then, with any semblance of propriety, indulge a sigh or encourage a tear over the grave of the departed saint for his own sake?

The subject to which we have now given our attention is applicable to our own case. The removal of Governor Smith by death, is to us all a just cause for lamentation. The relatives mourn not alone; we are all afflicted by this event of God's providence. Respect to his name and memory, and fidelity to the cause of Christ, justly demand a public notice of his character as a man and as a Christian.

John Cotton Smith was the son of Rev. Cotton Mather, and Mrs. Temperance Smith, and was born February 12, 1765. In his infancy he was publicly dedicated to God in baptism by his devotedly pious parents, and trained up by them in such a way as to warrant the expectation, which they fondly cherished, of his future piety and usefulness. At the age of fourteen, he entered Yale College, and graduated there in 1783. He soon after entered upon the study of the law, in the office of John Canfield, Esq., of this town, and was admitted to the bar in this county in March, 1786. But here his career, though brilliant, was comparatively short, as he was early called to higher official duties. His first election as a representative of his native town to the General Assembly took place in the year 1793. He was afterward chosen a representative in both sessions of the General Assembly in the years 1796, '97, '98, and '99; and in the latter session of the last named year he was chosen Clerk of the House. In May, 1800, he was chosen Speaker; and, in September of the same year, he was elected a representative to the second session of the Sixth Congress, being the first session of that body held at the present seat of government. He was re-elected to the Seventh, Eighth and Ninth Congress; but after the first session of the Ninth Congress, he resigned his seat in July, 1806. In October of the same year, he was again elected a representative to the State Legislature, and chosen Speaker of that body. And also in 1807–8. In 1809, he was elected a member of the Council; and in October of that year, he was appointed an associate judge of the Superior Court, and of the Supreme Court of Errors. In May, 1811–12, he was chosen Lieutenant Govenor; and from the death of Governor Grisworld, in October, 1812, he officiated as Chief Magistrate to the end of the term. He was then chosen Governor, and continued in the office four years. He received the honorary degree of Doctor of Laws from the Corporation of Yale College in September, 1814. In April, 1813, he was

elected a member of the Historical Society of Massachusetts; and in July, 1836, a member of the Royal Society of Northern Antiquarians, in Copenhagen, in Denmark. In 1826, he was chosen President of the A. B. C. F. M.; and in 1831, he was elected President of the American Bible Society, which latter office he held to the time of his decease.*

All these public stations he filled with ability and integrity. He presided over deliberative bodies with ease and dignity. He had few, if any, equals, as a presiding officer; and it is believed that he had no superior among his contemporaries. In the transaction of public business he was attentive and diligent, ever serving his generation faithfully. Perhaps, few men in public life have more sincerely aimed to promote the general welfare, or have been more successful in the benevolent undertaking. His life extended over a very interesting and important period of our country's history, and his influence has been greatly felt in establishing upon a firm basis and in perpetuating our civil and religious institutions.

The natural endowments of Governor Smith were of a superior order, and he was diligent in cultivating his mind and in storing it with various knowledge; and he thus qualified himself to fill places of public trust, with honor to himself and with great usefulness to his fellow-men. He was a correct and accomplished scholar. He was an indulgent companion and father, and an affectionate and faithful friend. For his gentlemanly deportment at all times and on all occasions, he was greatly distinguished. He was uniformly courteous to all, and he kindly welcomed all who called to pay him their respects, and strangers left his hospitable dwelling with veneration for the man, and with grateful recollections of their profitable intercourse with him. Very few men have been more extensively known, revered and loved. Great confidence was reposed in his judgment and discretion, especially in relation to the management of the benevolent enterprises of the day; and his advice was sought from distant parts of the land by those who were not personally known to him.

Much more might, in truth, be said of Governor Smith as a man, but I speak not to strangers; I speak of him to those who have known him longer and better than myself.

But if there was much to admire, revere, and love in him as a man, there was much to admire, revere, and love in him as a Christian. He was not a perfect man, he did not pretend to be, and yet we rarely find a person of fewer blemishes in his character. His mind was pure; his heart was benevolent. Governor Smith was hopefully converted in early life, and publicly professed his discipleship under the ministry of his honored father; and he walked worthy of his high vocation, adorning the doctrine of God our Sa-

* It may not be uninteresting here to state that the President of the French and Foreign Bible Society, Admiral Count Ver Huell, died but a few days before Gov. Smith, at nearly the same age; and that a communication addressed to the latter has just been received at the Bible House, announcing this event, from Count Delaborde, the Secretary.

[illegible] and the peculiar temptations and trials of his public career. After his retirement from office his devotedness increased, and toward the close of his pilgrimage he exhibited the clearest evidence of a softened and subdued spirit and of an uncommon meetness for Heaven. His last painful illness he endured with almost unparalleled patience and with unmurmuring submission to the will of God. If he appeared great in his life, he appeared more truly so in his death: and we trust he is now exalted before the throne of God, adoring and praising Him with the blest company who have come out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

Governor Smith was a lineal descendant of the Puritans—imbibed strongly their religious principles and system of faith—and was neither afraid nor ashamed to avow them openly. No man more than he revered the character and honored the memory of those worthies; and he exerted his influence to the last to sustain the institutions which they, with great labor and sacrifice, established. Without any spirit of intolerance, he loved and firmly adhered to the church of his own denomination, with its simple, energetic order.

He loved the Bible as the inspired book of God, and as the only rule of faith and practice; and his habit of perusing its sacred pages is highly worthy of our imitation. As he was preeminently a man of order in all other concerns, so he was in this. Besides detached portions at family worship and at other occasions, he has read the Bible through in course annually for the last eight or ten years, and committed large portions of the New Testament to memory.

He remembered the sabbath day to keep it holy, and he reverenced the place where God's honor dwelleth. Though in his last days he was deprived in a great degree of the privilege of *hearing* the word, yet, from love to the place, and as an example to others, he was regularly found in the sanctuary.

He loved the duty of prayer in public, and in the family, and in the closet; and he continued the practice of kneeling and praying to his Father in secret, even after he had ceased to recognize his earthly friends.

He loved the benevolent institutions of the age; and, in a particular manner, he exerted his influence and contributed liberally of his substance to send the gospel to the heathen, and to disseminate copies of the word of God among the destitute.

Such, in brief, was the man whom we are called to lament and bury to-day. And we, as a Christian community, have great reason to lament him. He has long stood as a pillar in the Church, and his last anxiety was for the welfare of this beloved Zion. It was his heart's desire and prayer to God that we might be saved.

But his work is done, and he has gone to his everlasting reward in the Zion above. We shall meet him no more in this sanctuary, nor in the circle of prayer, nor in social intercourse. But let us all strive to be prepared to meet him in a more permanent and blissful intercourse above.

This respected circle of mourners will excuse me, if, in obedience to my feelings, my words to them on this afflictive occasion be few. Your honored father and devoted friend is now severed from your embrace. That heart is now cold which was once so warm with natural and benevolent affection for you; and the tongue is now parallyzed and mute, on which once dwelt the law of kindness, and which so often served to bless, to instruct, and to guide you in the path of truth, of holiness, and of Heaven. You have great reason to thank and to praise God that he gave you such a father and friend, and that he continued him with you so long: and now that He has removed him by death, it becomes you to humble yourselves under his mighty hand. Your Heavenly Father has laid his rod of correction upon you with the benevolent design of making you partakers of his holiness. In his death you are admonished to be prepared to follow him. His instructive example is before you for your imitation; and his triumphant death is before you for your encouragement to trust in his God and the God of his father. You have loved his society on earth, and may you all be prepared to enjoy it in Heaven. We commend you to God and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up and to give you an inheritance among them who are sanctified.

AT THE GRAVE.

After the interment, the Rev. Mr. Andrews, of Kent, uttered the following remarks, which found a response in every heart present:

I return thanks on behalf of the mourners, for all the kindness you have shown to our departed friend during his sickness, and for the honors you have now paid to his memory. We all feel that a great man has fallen in Israel. Beyond the bosom of his family, in whose inmost affections his memory will be embalmed; beyond the circle of his townsmen, among whom the most of his blameless and dignified life was passed; beyond the border of his native State, which delighted to honor him, and which he faithfully served in many and most distinguished stations; even throughout our common country, whose councils he helped to guide in times of darkness and peril; and especially in the Church of God, to which he freely gave the light of his wisdom and the aid of his benefactions, will his death be mourned as a calamity. One of the noblest of the men of a former and better age has been taken from us, and "we ne'er shall look upon his like again." But our joy and boast this day, is not that he was a statesman of enlarged insight; not that he was a scholar of refined taste; not that he was a gentleman, in whose deportment dignity and courtesy were so remarkably blended—"the observed of all observers"—but that he was a meek and humble disciple of Christ, rejoicing in the consolations, reverencing the ordinances, and laboring for the advancement of the Christian Faith. And we have laid him in the grave in the hope of a blessed resurrection, assured that the spirit, which now rests in peace, shall at the coming of our King, be re-united to the body, then raised and glorified after the likeness of the Lord. Amen.

FAMILY PRAYER.

'A HIGH and solemn duty rests on every father of a family to present himself, morning and evening with his family at the throne of grace. God commands it—duty requires it—gratitude for daily mercies enforces it. Such a duty cannot be habitually neglected without great danger of incurring the displeasure of God, and bringing his deep frown on the family that does it. Could the causes which have ruined so many children and youth, and rendered them a grief and living affliction to their parents and friends be traced to their true source, it would doubtless be found in habitual negect of family prayer. The silent and solemn judgments of God rest on such familes, because of this neglect to call on his name. "Pour out Thy fury on the nations that know Thee not, and upon the families that call not upon Thy name." Jer. 10: 25—is the affecting language of Jehovah, and may help to explain the waywardness and ruin which comes upon many an otherwise promising youth. The fact that a father of a family is not a professor of religion, furnishes no valid excuse for the neglect of family prayer. He ought to be a Christian and a praying man. His duties and relations to God and to his children require it.

On the other hand, what a beautiful spectacle is family piety. At the appointed hour, see the father, like the high priest of his household, assemble his family and conduct his children to the throne of heavenly grace, commending them to his Father and their Father, and to his watchful providence amid all the dangers and temptations which beset their daily path in life. It secures a daily and increasing confidence in the superintending care of that great and good Being whose protection they need while they live, and whose presence and support when they come to die. The duty of family prayer is enforced by every consideration of temporal and eternal good.

'Family prayer ought to be regarded by Christians not so much as a duty which they ought to perform, as in the light of a privilege which they are permitted to enjoy.

The case is this. God gives a man the permission to come to Him at all times with all his cares, and hopes, and interests, and promises to hear and grant his petitions. He places also under

his care a family, and connected with this family are almost all his worldly enjoyments and hopes. He must find peace and happiness here, or he must be perpetually miserable. His children must be protected from the temptations and dangers which beset them, or else they must, by their sinful courses, make his latter years of life a grievous burden, and bring down his gray hairs with sorrow to the grave. He has domestics, apprentices, or workmen in his household, to continue in sin or be for ever lost—or to come and give themselves up to the service of God. Now he has the permission to come with this household every day before God, and commit them to his care, and bring them under the subduing, softening influences of prayer. Can he, if he really has any love to God himself, hesitate? We trust not. He will not need to be driven to family prayer as a duty—he will cling to it eagerly, as to a privilege. If he does not, there is strong evidence that he does not understand the feelings of a true child of God.

1. Family prayer ought to be *regular*. There ought to be a regular time for it—a regular signal; and it would be better that each member of the family should have his regular, appointed place at the fireside. These things are of no importance in themselves, but they are of great importance as means of influencing hearts so under the control of circumstances and associations as ours are. If a little bell is struck at an appointed time, and the members of the household gather at once, each to his appointed seat, as arranged, perhaps, by an older child, and the service is commenced regularly and in order, the moral effect will be vastly greater, and more pleasant, and more salutary, than where the household are called together at any hour when they happen to be ready, sometimes before breakfast, sometimes after, and sometimes not at all; summoned, perhaps, by several messengers sent in opposite directions, and seating themselves in disorder, wherever they can find chairs, and moving to accommodate one another. Let no one say in reply to this that our family is so large and heterogeneous that we cannot be regular; it is in precisely such a family that order and method is most indispensable, and it is always possible to secure it. A college and a cotton factory are families with hundreds of inmates, and they are as regular as clock-work. If a large family is not regular, then it is owing not to its size, but to the habits or example of the head of it; at least, so far as family prayer is concerned, see to it that all things are done decently and in order.

2. The Bible should be read *and explained* at family prayer. Christians are seldom aware how ignorant their children and the various members of their household are of the truths and duties of religion, and even of the narratives and history of the Bible. These every master of a family can explain. He can, on the sabbath, read several chapters, with Scott, or some other commentary, and then, in the course of the week, read them to his family, a part of a chapter at each exercise, repeating the substance of the explanations and thoughts which he obtained from the commentary, and

also making other remarks which may occur to him. These explanations should be adapted to the youngest children present, and often addressed directly to them. By this means, the master of the family will increase his own knowledge of the Bible in the best possible way, and fix it in his mind, and he will awaken and concentrate the attention and the interest of all his family. For every one must have observed how immediate an effect a remark thrown in, in reading the Scriptures, has in arousing and fixing the attention of all present. Even if the explanatory remark expresses nothing in itself very new or valuable, it is of great importance for the purpose of keeping the audience interested and attentive.

3. Family prayer should be short, simple, varied and appropriate. Many of the members of the household are persons of uncultivated minds, unaccustomed to long mental effort, and others are very young, and it is better to secure good attention for a short period, than weariness and restlessness for a longer time. Hence the prayers should be short. These minds, too, are unable to grasp what is abstruse or general, or lofty in sentiment or diction; therefore they should be simple. The circumstances of a family, too, are constantly varied: the morning and evening prayers should vary too. The petition should not be always the same—it should be the simple, heartfelt expression of the desires of the head of the family, for the time being: and he should bring the wants of his household before God in simple and minute detail.

4 The head of a family, in conducting family prayer, should not have in mind its effects upon his household, but upon God. That is, he should not be thinking, while at prayer, of influencing, by means of it, the minds of his family, but should take the attitude of simple supplication before the throne of God, asking him for favors which he only can bestow. There is, indeed, a very great direct effect produced in a family by the influence of the morning and evening petition; but this effect is not what ought to be in the mind of the speaker. To be acceptable to God, prayer must be really what it pretends to be, honest, heartfelt supplication for the blessings which the heart desires. The heart, therefore, must be on God, and not on the hearers around.

The duty of family prayer, thus performed, will have a vast influence upon the character and happiness of the household.

1. It will have an immense influence in softening and soothing all the irritating passions so likely to creep into a family. If a father calls together his children and domestics, and reads and explains a portion of the Bible, and offers a simple and heartfelt prayer in their presence, one that they can understand, and appreciate, and join in, what an influence it must have upon them during the day. The father will be more kind and patient, the mother more considerate for those employed by her, the children more peaceful and accommodating; and all this will take place as a natural effect of the exercise, independent of any direct agency the prayer may have in bringing the influences of the spirit upon their minds. If a man does not thus recognize the hand of God in the government of his

household, the members of his family have nothing to remind them of their accountability to any higher power. From Monday morning to Saturday night there is nothing to bring before them their relations to God, and their need of salvation. They are thus trained up for the world, and worldly influences will, of course, have control.

2. The practice of family prayer will bring down the blessing of God upon the children as they grow up and go out into the world. "In all thy ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct thy paths." Such is the promise; and if we habitually and heartily acknowledge God in our households, He will direct us in training them up for Him. He will guide us in all our plans and arrangements for them, and order everything for them in this world in such a way as to promote their best good. A man who brings up his children without the fear of God, cannot possibly expect to have them prosper in the world. Nothing is more common in a business, mercantile community, than for a man to neglect the worship of God in his household, in order that he may devote his whole time to his plans for making money; and then he finds at last, as his children grow up, their moral habits neglected, and destitute of all religious principle; they are utterly incapable of preserving or enjoying what their father made a slave of himself to procure for them; and the fortune, to procure which he neglected God and ruined his soul, they scatter to the winds in dissipation and vice as soon as they get possion. Ah, there is no gain in the end of any sort in attempting to live without God!

3. Family prayer is the most ready and efficient of the means of securing the salvation of the souls of our children. This service, if the parent is honest and sincere in it, has a steady and constant influence in keeping religious obligation before the minds of children, and in preparing their hearts to be affected by other means.'

A PROFITABLE SPENDING OF THE SABBATH.

'In the first place. Watch and pray, as you value your souls, against a spirit of carelessness and indifference in religion. Remember that the life of a Christian is a life of self-denial. It is a race—a pilgrimage—a warfare! Its exercises are described by wrestling, striving, watching, and the like. And of all the drones in the world, drones in God's hive are the least deserving the approbation of the Church, and the most under the frown of Heaven. The Scripture probably contains no expression of displeasure more impressive than that which is addressed to the Laodiceans, on this very subject—"So, then, because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold or hot, I will spurn thee out of my mouth." Yet it is astontonishing how soon we may be beguiled into such a frame of mind.

The commonness of religious exercises—the attractions of the world—and, above all, the corruption of depraved nature, have a

constant influence to produce this awful indifference. And few greater evidences can be afforded of it than the neglecting the worship of God in his sanctuary, or carelessly trifling with the morning of a Lord's day.

2. Rise early. Your enjoyment of the Sabbath and your attendance upon the worship of God in the morning of it, greatly depend upon this. If you have much to do before you can unite with God's people in his house, the time of your rising must be arranged accordingly. A lazy, sluggish professor, who can satisfy himself with consuming the best part of the morning in bed, is but ill prepared for the service of his Maker in the course of it. And scandalous it certainly is to any one who names the name of Christ, that a man who would rise for a sixpence, at almost any hour or any other day in the week, should shut his ears on the morning of a sabbath, when God is calling to him from Heaven, and be lulled by the devil to sleep.

The conduct of the wicked, who can rise at any time to unite in a party of pleasure; the conduct of heathens, who are waiting the rising of the sun, in order to pay the earliest adorations to him as soon as he makes his appearance; in a word, the conduct even of Satan himself, who is always on the alert, to destroy, if possible, the comforts and souls of men, is a sufficient reproof to such individuals.

3. Endeavor to enjoy a good Saturday evening. It was a custom with the Jews to have a season of preparation, previous to the duties of the sabbath. Their sabbath began at six in the evening; and at three in the afternoon began the preparation. God grant us that anxiety for the enjoyment of the sabbath, which will lead to a preparation for it, as far as we are able; and a good frame of mind on a Saturday evening will seldom lull a person to sleep, or make him indifferent about the worship of God on a sabbath morning.

4. Think of the rapid approach of death, and endeavor to realise to yourselves the views and feelings you will then have of what you have been, and what you have done, and what you have left undone, when you are just going to give in your account unto God. It is a lamentable fact, there are not a few in our churches and congregations, who are all their life long planting thorns in that pillow upon which at last they must lie down and die; and none are doing this more effectually than the careless and the slothful. "Ah," says one on a death bed, "that I had been more actively engaged in the service of God!" "O!" cries another, in the anguish of his soul, "that I could but live my time over again! What a different person would I be! O, the sins I have committed—the duties I have neglected—the sabbaths I have murdered!" But it is in vain! He is just on the borders of eternity; and all the wealth of worlds can neither purchase him a respite from death, nor afford him an opportunity of retrieving his conduct for ever! "O, that they were wise, that they understood this, that they would consider their latter end!"

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PUBLIC WORSHIP MORE ACCEPTABLE TO GOD THAN PRIVATE DEVOTION.

"His foundation is in the holy mountains. The Lord loveth the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob."—Psalm lxxxvii. 1, 2.

As a rational being, man has the *capacity* to worship God; and as God reveals himself man is under *obligation* to worship him. To be acceptable to God, this worship must be the tribute of free and sincere affection. Wherever such an offering is made, whether in the secret chamber, at the family altar, or in the public sanctuary, it is "a spiritual sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God." It also sends back into the heart of the worshiper, that joy and peace which are unspeakable and full of glory.

Of the varieties of Divine worship, this occasion will be taken to speak of THE PUBLIC WORSHIP OF GOD IN THE SANCTUARY. To this the text has direct reference. The position of the Psalmist was, with Mount Zion and the Temple in full view; and while he sees the thousands of Israel, as they come up from their different and distant abodes, congregating about the hallowed courts and altars of the Lord's house, his soul swells with pious exultation, and at length bursts forth in the abrupt exclamation—"His foundation is in the holy mountains. The Lord loveth the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob." The different families of Israel, spread abroad over the land of Judea, were all objects of God's great regard and favor. He loved their morning and their evening worship. But when, from their scattered dwellings, they came together at the Temple, and their combined numbers united in a public expression of loyalty and homage to Jehovah, their God, it was a higher testimony of cordial allegiance and devotion, and secured a higher measure of the Divine approbation. Their united sacrifice was more acceptable than their private offerings.

The ground for this Divine preference exists in all ages. We

may, therefore, give to the sentiment in the text, the form of a general proposition as follows:—

PUBLIC WORSHIP IS MORE LOVELY IN THE SIGHT OF GOD THAN PRIVATE WORSHIP.

The course pursued in the investigation of this subject, will be the following order—

I. *To adduce some facts in the Divine administration, indicative of God's higher estimate of public worship.*

II. *To state some of the reasons why, in the nature of the case, God should prefer public to private worship.*

The indication of this higher estimate is found—

1. *In the facts of the Divine Institution of public worship.*

The Sabbath is favorable for all religious worship. It gives occasion for more uninterrupted and intimate communion with God, in both the closet and the family, and well as in the sanctuary. I would not, therefore, adduce the institution of the Sabbath, as a fact indicative of any Divine preference for either mode of worship. It is an auxiliary in all true religious worship.

But, when God gave special ordinances to his ancient people, conspicuous among them all, was this solemn institution of public worship. Three periods in the year were assigned as seasons of holy convocation, in which all the families of Israel were expected to appear together at the place of the Tabernacle, and afterwards at the Temple, viz: the feast of the passover; the offering of the first fruits; and the feast of Tabernacles. Special ceremonies and solemn services were enjoined for each of these convocations. And then, in addition to these more conspicuous solemnities, there were the public services for the new moons, the year of rest, and the year of release or general jubilee. Moreover, each day at the Temple was the morning and the evening sacrifice offered, and all who were present joined in the worship, "praying without at the time of the sacrifice." These ordinances, relative to public worship, originated in the changed circumstances and condition of God's people, as they left their bondage in Egypt, and were about to assume their national independence and their permanent inheritance in the land of Canaan. Among other places we have this general institution of public worship quite explicitly given by Moses in the following words—"Ye shall not do after all the things that we do here this day, every man what is right in his own eyes." "But, when ye go over Jordan, and dwell in the land which the Lord your God giveth you to inherit, and when he giveth you rest from all your enemies round about, so that ye dwell in safety; then there shall be a place which the Lord your God shall choose, to cause his name to dwell there, thither shall ye bring all that I command you; your burnt

offerings, and your sacrifices, your tithes, and the heave offering at your hand, and all your choice vows which ye vow unto the Lord." "Take heed to thyself that thou offer not thy burnt offerings in every place that thou seest; but in the place which the Lord shall choose in one of thy tribes, there thou shalt offer thy burnt-offerings, and there thou shalt do that I command thee." Deut. xii, 8—14.

Now, the Patriarchs and ancient holy men had been devout and sincere worshippers of Jehovah before these ordinances had been given. They had enjoyed private communion with God in seasons of sweet secret retirement and meditation; they had erected their altars wherever they had fixed their dwelling places, and brought their families to participate in domestic praise and prayer. Why the public Tabernacle set up? Why the Temple, in process of time, built at such expense, and dedicated to the public service of God with so much solemnity? Why superadd any thing to the blended sympathies and affections which mingled in the primitive Patriarchal worship? It is answered, the church of God had now become a conspicuous and publicly organized community: it had been distinguished by the most signal and sublime manifestations of Jehovah's power and protection: it had received in large measures an increase of light, and promise, and privilege: it was, henceforth, to attract the more direct and constant observation of mankind, and fill a much larger space in the history of public transactions and national influences: it behooved God, therefore, to demand from it more open, conspicuous, and public pledges of gratitude, loyalty, and homage. Private and family worship are still obligatory upon man, and as precious in the sight of God as before; but these cannot now come up to the claims imposed by these more signal manifestations of love and favour. The church is now placed like "a city on a hill," and her acknowledgement of God, and the united recognition of his sovereignty, must be made proportionably prominent and public. And in the fact that God thus instituted it, we read his higher appreciation of it.

2ndly. *The fact that on special occasions, public homage to God has been specially demanded, indicates his high pleasure in it.*

Many instances occur in the history of God's dealings with his people, when some special interposition was followed, by as special a requisition for the public acknowledgment of his supremacy and authority as their Lord and Sovereign. When thrown into some critical position; in the apprehension of sudden calamity; in exigencies of danger from enemies, and threatened disaster from impending judgments for their sins; in many such cases God required a public recognition of their sense of the danger, and their entire dependence upon him for all deliverance. On occasions like these, the Elders were commanded to "proclaim a Fast, to call a solemn assembly, and gather all the people to the house of the Lord, and

cry unto the Lord their God." So, also, when there had been a special deliverance from pestilence, or famine, or from the sword; and when they had achieved any remarkable victory, and gained deliverance from their oppressors; or when there had been an unusual abundance in the harvest, and the fruits of the earth, and remarkable providential bounties; in such a condition the whole nation was called to public thanksgiving and united praise to Jehovah.

But, certainly, all this fasting and prayer, or this praise and thanksgiving, could have been performed in secret. The entire people, "with their families apart," might have been required thus to give themselves to penitential sorrow, or to religious rejoicing. Why not save the fatigue and trouble of this public convocation? It is answered: No private acknowledgment of God, or worship rendered to him in the retirement of the family, though faithfully performed through "all the dwellings of Jacob," could meet the higher demand occasioned by these special emergencies. God has wrought some grand general deliverance, or he is manifesting his displeasure for some great national wickedness; and he will have an open and conspicuous recognition and acknowledgment of his power and sovereignty. In their secret devotion, let them be as retired and unostentatious as may be; in their family devotion let them include simply the members of their own household; when engaged in individual fasting, the notices of such fasting before God may be concealed from every human eye; but when God has openly revealed himself as the avenger of his people's wrongs, or the public corrector and chastiser of his people's sins, no private acknowledgment can equal the occasion or meet the demand. They must come and "bow together before the Lord." They should manifest their allegiance and devotion as openly and publicly as the divine interposition. This, God at such special seasons required, and it is the clear indication that he was pleased with it rather than any private service.

3rdly. *The fact that the ordinance of public worship is perpetuated under the Christian dispensation.*

The death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ, his ascension to power and authority in heaven, and the gifts of the Holy Spirit, have made sure the safety and final triumph of the church. This is to be effected, notwithstanding, by the intervention of human agency. Embassadors, commissioned by Christ, are sent out to the great work of bringing all nations under his sway. And among their greatest facilities, and strongest auxiliaries in this work, is the establishment of public worship, and the stated administration of religious ordinances. Not annual seasons of convocation, or solemn assemblies when special circumstances demand, but regular weekly congregations on the Sabbath, and occasional services as demanded by the religious wants and interests of the people.

Provision is made, in the orderly organization of the church, for Pastors and Teachers to the end of time, and the promise of the Saviour's presence is given to the end of the world. The example of inspired apostles and primitive saints is left on record, in relation to their frequent "coming together in one place," and "with one accord;" and the solemn injunction given as applicable to all ages, "not to forsake the assembling of themselves together;" and all this augmented in its obligation and encouragement by his own beginning of this great work in sending his spirit "like a rushing mighty wind," and bringing thousands to his standard at the very time when "devout men out of every nation under heaven" were assembled together.

Through all the experiences, and amid all the labours of the Christian church and the Christian ministry, secret, and family, and social prayer is to be maintained; the Lord requireth this and delighteth in it, and adds his blessing to it; but he does not permit that it should at all stand in the place of the public services of his house. The great service, which his people under the Gospel are perpetually to observe is, the solemn worship of Jehovah on the Sabbath at the sanctuary. The condition of the church, and the ends designed by it under the new dispensation, made such changes in the manner of her public assemblies and worship expedient; and the fact that the Lord Jesus has so provided; and that God, by the pouring out of the Spirit, has so blessed these provisions; and that notwithstanding the continued obligation of closet and family worship, public worship is superadded, and perpetually enjoined, and pre-eminently blessed; all this is a full indication that while God loves all the members and families of his people in their secret and domestic devotion, he yet loves the united devotions of the public sanctuary better.

These facts, the original institution of public worship as superadded to private; the special requisition of it on special occasions, and the perpetuation of it regularly forever in the Christian church, abundantly indicate God's higher regard for it. He will not be pleased that, in any case, it should give up its proper and prominent position to any form of more private and secluded devotion.

II. *Some reasons why, in the nature of the case, God should prefer public to private worship.*

We may not presume that we shall comprehend all the grounds of God's preference in any case. His purposes and his dealings are as they seem good in his sight; but the reasons why they seem good in his sight are very seldom fully disclosed to any of his creatures. In this case there are at least some reasons for God's higher regard to public worship, which are quite obvious to our apprehension, and which it may be profitable particularly to notice.

1. ***Public worship is attended with greater sacrifices.***

That piety is the best which will make the greatest sacrifices. That faith or love is the strongest which will bear the greatest trials. A cup of cold water given to a needy disciple shall not go unrewarded, but that reward cannot be so great as for a measure of faith which "esteems the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt," or that which sacrifices a dear son at the command of Jehovah. The greater degree of the same good thing is of the greater worth, and God is proportionably better pleased with it.

The sacrifice, however, must be for the truth's sake. Self-inflicted austerities, and painful penances humanly imposed, constitute no evidence of genuine piety. How rigidly soever they may be inflicted, or how patiently soever endured, they can only foster the pride, superstition, and self-righteousness in which they originate. But where an unequivocal intimation of God's will points out the path of duty, that is the noblest and the loveliest spirit in the sight of heaven, which will face the greatest dangers and endure the deepest sufferings, to fulfil the revealed pleasure of the Lord. Those services, therefore, in which patience and self-denial are the most cultivated, will be the most pleasing to God.

We apply this principle to the subject in hand. That Jewish worshipper, who left his business and his home, and endured the fatigue, expense, and sometimes dangers, of a long journey, that himself and his family might appear at the appointed feast in Jerusalem, made a sacrifice incomparably greater than all which was demanded for his private and family worship. When this was endured from love and obedience to God, he regarded the service proportioned to the sacrifice.

And thus with the public worship of God in the Christian sanctuary. This is not so burdensome as the ancient Tabernacle and Temple service; but now, in proportion as the sacrifice of public, exceeds that of private worship, is the service of the former more acceptable to God than the latter. The support of public worship, and faithful attendance upon it, must be at considerable expense of ease, convenience, time, and money, and which might all be saved if God were as well pleased with the scattered worship of seperate families. We have no right to inquire "for what purpose is this waste?" This very expense, as the occasion for a development of higher faith and stronger love, is a reason why God is better pleased with it; and any man who complains of the burden, and is restive under the sacrifice demanded, is offended at that very point where God finds occasion for higher pleasure and approbation. He meant that it should cost more time, and fatigue, and more money; and when you cheerfully meet this augmented demand, it is well. God is better pleased with you on that very account, than when kneeling in your closet, or at your family altar. It is a higher expression of your piety. It is a brighter test of your faith and love.

2.—*It exerts a more powerful and extensive moral influence.*

The influence of regular secret prayer, upon the heart and life of a Christian, is very great. No child of God can afford to be without it. Every Christian grace withers when this is neglected. So, also, is the influence of morning and evening family worship powerful. The Husband and Parent finds deep and sweet emotions rising within him, when committing himself and those he so tenderly loves, to the guardian care and mercy of his covenant God and Saviour; and the feelings of every member of that favored family are quickened, their sympathies awakened, and their mutual affection promoted, while they together bow at the footstool of one common Father and Redeemer. There is not a family in the land, which is living in the neglect of this sacred duty, that is not thereby shutting up one of the most precious fountains of domestic blessedness. The loss of its influence is an exclusion of the most sure and powerful means of family peace. purity and joy, and of providential prosperity and comfort.

But, in the public courts of the Lord, there are many influences flowing in upon the soul, and many emotions are there awakened, which can never spring out of the devotions of the closet or of the family. The solemn station there taken, before men, angels, and Jehovah, is peculiarly impressive. The public acknowledgment of religious obligation and dependence, and the practical commitment of the conscience to the responsibilities of such an acknowledgment, exert their silent and perpetual influences. The circumstances throw a sacred interest around the place; and the services summon the attention to the most momentous themes, which the mind can contemplate; and the common participation in the same hallowed employments, and dwelling upon the same moving truths, diffuse a glow of mutual sympathies through the worshiping congregation. The solemn stillness of the holy day, the voice of prayer and praise which alone breaks in upon the silence, the earnest appeals of divine truth from the lips of God's living Messenger, all combine to make an impression upon the heart and conscience, more extensive, and more powerful and permanent, than any private religious services can produce. The sanctuary is thus, emphatically, made to be "the House of God, and the Gate of Heaven."

Wherever the sabbath bell is heard, it checks the rush of earth's busy millions in their pursuit of the world, and summons them to come and bow in the presence of the Lord, their Maker. The eager mind is forced to pause, amid its selfish plans of pleasure, and frantic schemes of wealth and aggrandisement, and is made to think of death and judgment, of God and God's commandments. The Christian lays aside the toils, and leaves behind him the cares of the week, and comes up to God's house that he may catch more life and strength to run his race amid the the snares and temptations

which surround him. His graces kindle anew in Christian communion, as the coals glow with increasing light and heat when brought in contact. From no other source, as from the public worship of God on the sabbath, goes there out an influence which so widely blesses the families of man, and the nations of the earth. Every effort to extend this influence is salutary and propitious for the dearest interests of humanity, while all that goes to diminish and restrain its power tends directly, not only to the irreligion and final condemnation of man, but also to blast the prosperity, and crush the liberty, and dash the brightest hopes, of the nation. In this wide-spread influence upon the community, and more powerful tendency to bless man for time and eternity, we can see a reason for God's higher regard of public worship.

3.—*It stands connected with the most signal displays of the power of divine truth.*

To his weeping disciples at his departure, the Savior promised to send the Comforter, who should abide with them forever. To the world, the great work of this messenger was, to "convince of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment." And, now, nowhere upon earth has this two-fold work of the Spirit, in comforting the saint and convicting the sinner, been so signally effected, as in connection with solemnities of public worship. Here divine truth has had its most pungent, and also its most soothing application to human hearts. Consciences, which had slumbered beneath all other influences, have been here aroused; and sorrowing despondency, which had "refused to be comforted" from all other sources, has been here consoled, cheered, and made to possess a fulness of joy.

By the sick bed, and at the dying hour of a friend, or, when he himself is on the borders of the grave, a sinner may be most fearfully aroused, most awfully terrified. Standing with others over an opened grave, and witnessing the lowering down of the closed coffin, which conceals the cold form of some departed associate, and all covered up in darkness and silence a sinner may here possess feelings the most solemn and awful. But, it is in the house of God, where the quick and searching words of divine truth have been applied with wise discrimination, and urged upon the conscience with faithful and affectionate importunity, that this sinner has been the most thoroughly arrested in his course, and made the most to feel himself alone with his God, and most vividly to anticipate the coming scenes of the judgment, and the awful issues of the final sentence. Here the soul, aroused to a sense of guilt and danger, has been the most often forced to admit its righteous condemnation, and open itself unsheltered to the message, which sought him out with dreadful particularity, crying "though art the man."

Yes, and here also, in softest, sweetest sounds, the voice of mercy from the Savior's dying words, has fallen upon the ear of penitential sorrow, with the most melting, soothing tenderness, and filled

the contrite bosom with new joys and peace, unknown in any other place but Heaven. Here, in the house of God, sin has been the most effectually rebuked, the Devil in his malignity the most signally defeated, and more souls redeemed from his dominion, and brought home to God and glory, than in all places of the world beside. While, then, God shall love his own truth, and the honor of his only begotten Son, the sanctuary of his holiness, where both are the most conspicuously exalted, will ever be the place on earth most lovely in his sight.

4.—*It is the grand instrumentality for perpetuating and extending the Church.*

Perpetual seclusion is a very unpromising condition for the cultivation of personal piety, and still more unfavorable upon the Church and the world. The dark ages hung their veil of sackcloth over the nations, when piety and learning retired to the cloister, and public worship was left to the empty pageantry of the Romish Ritual. The light of this day of Christian activity and benevolence would go out in darkness, ere our generation had passed, were the sanctuary to be deserted, and all manifestations of devotion to be shut up within the family and the closet. How effectually would the tide of business and worldly speculation set in upon the Church, and sweep away her spirituality and humility, did not the weekly sabbath set up its barriers in its public ministrations, and force back the rising billows! Break down these barriers; abolish the sabbath, and demolish the sanctuary, and scatter the worshiping congregations; and all the pious may retire to their homes and pray and weep in secret places as they will, it will all be in vain for the Church and the world. The giant forces of pleasure and of mammon will soon, then, be combined in some form of bold Infidelity, and sweep away from the earth "whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely and of good report."

How direct is the tendency to all that is good, in the ordinances of public worship! All ages and all ranks come together before God. The same authority lays its claims alike upon the high and the low, the rich and the poor. All adventitious distinctions are wholly lost in the presence of that great Sovereign, before whom the nations of the earth are but as the dust of the summer's threshing-floor. The factitious distinctions and proud prerogatives of wealth and station are merged in the overwhelming conviction of one common condemnation, and the necessity of securing an interest in one common salvation. Jesus receives to his favor the poor and the oppressed as readily as the rich and the powerful; and, indeed he receives neither, except upon the condition that they come as Brethren, with one spirit of faith and love, and one sense of destitution

and dependence, and alike begging for mercy through the grace of a crucified Saviour.

It is this instrumentality, by which is to be preserved our form of civil government, and all our free institutions. By this, through the Spirit of God, are to be built up all the waste places of Zion in the land, and the ordinances of the Gospel to be kept co-extensive with our rapidly spreading population. By this, that the light of Gospel truth and hope is to be diffused over the dark territories of pagan Idolatry. No other agency, which separates itself from this, and excludes this from the place of its operations, will prove effectual in our own land, or upon foreign shores. This is the reality of the Apocalyptic vision—"An Angel flying in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting Gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people." Before his flight the woes and sorrows, the wretchedness and the sins of the nations pass away, and the glory of the latter day dawns upon the expecting inhabitants of the earth. Keep up this agency, in its purity and strength, and civil, and social, and religious blessings abound; but as you abolish this agency, religion droops and virtue fails, the dark passions of the depraved heart swell unrestrained and rage unchecked, till the judgments of heaven, as in Sodom and Gomorrha, cut short the rebellion and impiety in hopeless desolation. This good which it secures, and the evil it excludes is another ground of God's higher regard for public worship.

5.—*It is most like Heaven.*

Heaven has been prepared for God's people, in a manner not only the most subservient to their blessedness, but also the most perfectly in conformity with his own pleasure. The heavenly state is perfection. All, there, is as God would have it. There has been no necessity, to adapt its employments for the continuation of abounding temptations, nor of modifying its ordinances for the control and restraint of indwelling depravity. Perfect holiness allows free scope for complete blessedness. The entire sanctification of its worshipers permits that every faculty should be employed in just that manner which is, itself, most pleasing to God, Heaven is wholly after God's pleasure.

And, now, what is the worship of heaven? Who conceives it to be a place of solitude and seclusion! Who believes that this eternal home of the blessed is peopled by lonely spirits, occupied at a distance each from each, and every one in his own isolated and solitary devotion! Are the great multitude of God's redeemed disjoined in their action and their worship, and alone in their joy?—No, their voices are in harmony. Their hallelujahs, as they break forth from numbers without number, rise in concert before the throne, and cease not day nor night. All is pure and perfect, and also united and public devotion. All heaven combined rings aloud the ceaseless anthem, and pours forth the endless hosanna.

And, now, the place on earth the most like to this and the nearest allied to heaven, is the house of God on the Christian sabbath, filled with sincere and humble worshipers. Go through all the earth, and look upon all the scenes which she may any where present; visit the cottage and the palace, the secret chambers and the family altars; and though you shall find many places in our fallen world which God still loves, and where angels delighted rejoice to linger; yet no where shall you come so near heaven in its glory, as when you enter the sacred courts of the Lord, and mingle your prayers and praises with his children, while he bows his ear to hearken. No where else does heaven bend down so low, nor earth spring up so high to meet it. No other place upon his footstool does God so well love, as the assemblies of his saints in worship, "The Lord loveth the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob."

INFERENCES.

1.—*All the arrangements for public worship should be amply and cheerfully provided.*

A House for God is to be built, and maintained perpetually in good repair. This should be in a favorable location, of sufficient dimensions to accommodate the congregation, the architecture chaste and in good proportion, the finishing neat and pleasant, and all its accommodations for heating, lighting, seating, &c., comfortable and agreeable. The whole charge of keeping the house in readiness for public worship, on all regular and special occasions, should be entrusted to some competent and faithful person, who is to be held responsible that all is maintained in decent, and convenient order. The stated ministration of the word and ordinances is to be secured, and which can never so effectually and profitably be done as in the regular and permanent settlement of the gospel Ministry. And there each responsible head of the household is bound to make such regulations in his business, and such arrangements in his domestic economy, that all the members of the family may attend as regularly, conveniently, and profitably as is practicable.

This will require a considerable sacrifice of labor, and time, and money, to be repeated year by year. But it is all righteously demanded. It is due to patriotism, to benevolence, to piety. By no possible means, without this, can so much good be done to the land, the church, and the world. Where shall you bestow labor and expense so readily as in that very place, and for that very object, which God loves most of all on earth? For what other possible end, shall you spare your time and money, by withdrawing it from this? This is sacredly due from every community; and what is

selfishly withholden from this service which God most of all approves, and applied to any other end whatsovever, will be found to be robbery of God, and wages earned only to be "put in a bag with holes."

2.—*A regular attendance upon public worship is demanded.*

The building of a house for God and the provision of all its conveniencies and accommodations, and the settlement of a Pastor, are not themselves an end, but only a necessary means to the securing of a higher end. The ultimate end is such a pure and public service rendered to God, that he shall be more pleased with it than all else on earth. Where, then the arrangements are made, they must be used. Where the house of God is open, and his message is to be delivered, you must be there, and enter, and "hear what God the Lord will speak."

Very trifling obstacles often hinder from coming to the house of God, and very weak excuses are often most wickedly made to shield the delinquent from the censure of others, or the upbraidings of his own conscience. Let this great truth be ever before the eyes, *the ordinance of public worship is God's most valued institution.* What if you can read the Bible, and pray, and meditate on divine things in your own dwelling? What if you assume to do this from Sabbath to Sabbath, and refrain your foot from going to the house of God? Let this thought dash all the presumptuous comfort you are attempting to gain. God is not so well pleased; he does not love me nor my worship here so much as if I were this moment in his public courts with his people. You are neglecting an ordinance of heaven of the very highest moment. So far as your example and influence go, you are breaking down one of the strongest barriers against vice and crime which God has anywhere erected in our fallen world. You are also weakening some of his most powerful instrumentalities for the everlasting salvation of the soul. When you, therefore, at any time feel the rising inclination to absent yourself from your place in the Sanctuary, for a reason which the truth does not sanction, let this conviction come up with all its force, that "the Lord loveth the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob:" and let this thought quicken your step to the place where God hath chosen to place his name. Every Sabbath morning should find yourself and your family in your place, with the honest declaration in your heart, "now then are we all here present before God, to hear what is appointed thee of God," "How amiable are thy tabernacles, O Lord God of Hosts." "I had rather be a door-keeper in the house of the Lord than to dwell in the tents of wickedness." "A day in thy courts is better than a thousand."

3rdly. *Yield to the influence and instructions here imparted.*

It is not place alone, but the right heart in the right place, which is acceptable to God. The Sanctuary is the right place for all

people on the Sabbath day, but the heart of penitence and faith, love and obedience is demanded. Here is the source of a thousand strong, tender, and solemn influences. "The faith once delivered to the saints" is here defended, expounded, and enforced. Here your prayers go up together before God for those great blessings, temporal and eternal, which you all need. Here you commemorate Jesus' dying love, and give your renewed vows and pledges to be wholly the Lord's. Here you bring your children whom God hath given you, and dedicate them to Jehovah in the ordinance of his own appointment. Here, too, you bring the cold remains of your departed friends, and in all the freshness and fullness of your grief you look to God awhile in solemn prayer, that your afflictions may be sanctified to your everlasting salvation, and that you may be comforted by the grace and the Spirit of the Lord, and then carry away the dear form to its silent resting place until the resurrection. Here is your chosen place to meet with God, and worship him unitedly on earth, and transact with him your business for eternity. Let then this place, the centre of so many sympathies, the source of so many solemn and sacred influences, be dear and precious to your hearts. Let no thoughts and plans, no feelings and affections intrude themselves here, which shall be a profanation of the place and a prevention of God's highest approbation and favour. Yield to all these kindly influences; obey all these divine instructions. It is this spirit alone which can secure the high favor and love of God towards your Zion. Prepare here for the duties and temptations of the week, the trials and disappointments of life, the certain coming of the hour of death. Prepare here to meet God in judgment, and to live forever with God in heaven. So prize and improve the blessings of the Sabbath and the institution of public worship, that this house may be to you truly, "the house of God and the gate of heaven;" and that God may also, here, pour out his spirit, and revive his work, and renew and sanctify the hearts of the entire community around you. "Arise, O Lord, into thy rest, thou, and the ark of thy strength." "Let thy Priests be clothed with righteousness, and let thy saints shout for joy." "Bless abundantly her provisions, and satisfy her poor with bread." In this house of God on earth, let both parents and children become prepared for a higher worship, in that "house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." AMEN.

SERMON CCCCXVIII.

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WAR AS A MEANS OF SETTLING NATIONAL DISPUTES.

"Shall the sword devour forever?"—2 SAMUEL II: 26.

Of none of the great evils which afflict our race, do we form such inadequate conceptions, as of the evil of war. This is owing, in part, to our happy inexperience of its horrors. For more than thirty years the clarion of war has not been heard on our shores. Europe too, during most of this period, has been slumbering on her arms. Few generations since time began, have had so little knowledge and experience of war as the generation now living. It has been exhibited to us only in the dazzling dress of poetry, fiction, and history; where its horrors are carefully concealed beneath its gaudy trappings, and its crimes christened by names of virtue. We see its plumes, and epaulettes, and harlequin finery; we hear of the magnificence of the apparatus, the bravery of the troops, the glory of the victor; but the character of the contest in the sight of heaven is not considered; the story of the miseries and wrongs which follow in its train is untold.

We are wont to look upon war, moreover, as a game at which rulers have, *ex officio*, a right to play whenever they please. Accordingly, when rumors reach us from Washington that our government proposes to engage in a war with England or Mexico, we receive the intelligence much as if it related to the tariff, or a national bank; whereas it ought to call forth a note of remonstrance, which should remind our rulers whose servants they are, and whose interests they stake in this fearful game.

It is a matter in which every individual has a deep interest, and ought to have a voice. It is his right as a citizen, and his duty as a constituent of the government of this nation, to bring his influence to bear upon this great question; for in the measure of his influence he is responsible for a right issue. Nor is the right or responsibility of any individual diminished, but rather increased, by his being a Christian or a Christian *Minister*. If, on a subject so intimately connected with the interests of Christ's kingdom, his ambassadors are silent or timid, they betray the cause they are set to defend. This is not a *political* question merely, and the discussion of it, in its moral and religious bearings, can not identify the preacher with any political party. All parties deprecate war, and if that man walks upon the soil of this Christian land who covets a contest with England, "*him* (and him only) have I offended."

But while there is but one sentiment in the community respecting the desirableness of such a contest, there may be a diversity of opinion respecting the necessity and morality of this mode of settling controversies. Without wishing to exaggerate the probabilities of war, or to excite groundless alarm, I have thought it might be profitable to contemplate war as an *evil*, and as a *tribunal for the settlement of national disputes.* This subject has a special appropriateness to the day which commemorates the birth of the father of our republic; and is not inappropriate, surely, to the day which commemorates the resurrection of the Prince of Peace.

I. There are some features of war, an examination of which will help us to form a correct estimate of the contest which now threatens this nation.

1. Its Expensiveness. The expense of *being prepared for war* is the greatest of all national burdens. And this expense, it should be considered, is not in the natnre of an investment in works of internal improvement, or an appropriation for individual relief—it is an absolute *waste.* This nation has been wiser than most others in this respect. and the consequence is, we are entirely undefended against foreign aggression. The complaint is made at almost every session of Congress, that we are indifferent to national defence. I grant that our means of defence are such as to render war with England madness. For we have but 77 vessels of war of all classes, while England has 455. Our regular army consists of about 10,000 men, while England has an army of 300,000.* But what has it *cost* us to maintain our puny war establishment *in time of peace?* For several years past the current expenses of our government have been about $26,000,000 annually; of this sum about $21,000,000 have been appropriated to military and naval purposes, *i. e.* 80 cents in every dollar of our expenses are for warlike preparations; *and yet we are not prepared for war.* Within fifty years we have spent more than $400,000,000 *in time of peace* for warlike preparations. If we add to this the expense of supporting our militia system, which is estimated at $1,335,000,000, we shall have $1,735,000,000 spent in national defence, which is *seven times* the amount spent for all other purposes; *and yet we are unprepared for war.* Let those who are taxed for this outlay consider, that the annual expense of one such vessel of war as the North Carolina, is equal to the annual expense of any six of our colleges; and that the average annual cost of each *gun* in the navy would more than support twenty missionaries; and then imagine what it would cost to be adequately prepared for a war with England.

But *actual* war is still more expensive. I will say nothing of the incalculable sums expended in European wars, nor of the debts

* The statistics contained in this paragraph are taken from an Oration on the True Grandeur of Nations, by Charles Sumner, Esq., and the Statistical Almanac for 1846.

incurred in them, under which the whole continent groans. It cost this nation $350,000,000 to purchase its independence by the war of the Revolution. It cost $120,000,000 to obtain *nothing* from England by the war of 1812. It cost $40,000,000 to hunt a few Indians from the everglades of Florida. If to this be added the expense of preparation, the derangement of commerce, the loss of time and of property by plunder and fire, the sum will be increased fourfold.

The expensiveness of war, I grant, is but the smallest item of its mischiefs; and yet when we think how much this inconceivable sum might have done to promote individual comfort and national prosperity, and to spread the light and glory of the gospel over the earth; we cannot but mourn that it should have been worse than wasted in the work of human butchery.

2. Consider the expense of *human life* incurred in war. History furnishes such data, on this subject, as the following. There fell in the battle of Issus 110,000 men; in the battle of Arbela 300,000; in the siege of Jerusalem 1,100,000; in the invasion of Milan 300,000; at the siege of Acre 300,000; in the wars of Hannibal 600,000; in one of the battles of Julius Caesar 400,000 of the enemy; in Xerxes' expedition into Greece, nearly his whole army of 5,000,000 were destroyed; besides all the Greeks whom they slew. About 20,000,000 perished in the wars of Justinian; 32,000,000 in the butcheries of Jenghis Khan; nearly 6,000,000, the flower of Europe, in the Crusades; 5,000,000 in the wars following the French Revolution; 200,000 in our own Revolution. It is estimated that not less than 14,000,000,000 of our race have perished in war, or eighteen times the present population of the globe. Think of this, and consider that these men have not gone into eternity by the will and hand of their Maker, and amid the comforts of home, but by violence, and amid all the inconceivable agonies and horrors of the battle field. They have died in the heat of their diabolical passions, and gone raging with the fury of human tigers, from the field of slaughter into the presence of their God. Oh! when those 14,000,000,000 souls shall confront their murderers and their Judge on the final day, and we behold the spectacle; how then shall we regard the trade of war?

It would doubtless render our conceptions of the horrors of war far more vivid, if I should paint to your imagination the scenes of the battle field, but I will not shock your sensibilities by such a painful exhibition;—instead of this I will only refer you to the *specimen*, on a small scale, which was recently exhibited in this city. A few months ago, by the explosion of a single bomb, two or three individuals were torn in pieces. This whole community was shocked by the catastrophe. Multiply the horrors of that spectacle a thousand fold; put a *thousand* mangled corpses and expiring sufferers in the place of every *one*, and you have a fair representa-

tion of a field of battle after an engagement. A few years ago a single gun burst on board the Princeton. By this disaster several of our citizens were killed, and the whole nation stood aghast at the recital. But that destruction was only a hundredth part of what that engine of death was expected to effect when turned against an enemy. Multiply the carnage of that scene a thousand fold; strew as many thousands of mangled and dying soldiers over the bloody decks of a whole fleet; and you have the glorious spectacle of a naval engagement. But these are not the only items which should enter into our estimate of war.

3. The *moral evils* of war are still more important.

Look a moment at the ethics of war, and you will see whether it is a suitable school in which to train immortal beings for heaven. The soldier who enters the army, whether by enlistment or by conscription, must leave his conscience at home; for by the laws of war he must obey his commander's orders, whether he commands what conscience approves or condemns. "Obey all orders from your superiors," said Lord Nelson, "without inquiring whether they are right or wrong, and *hate a Frenchman as you would the Devil.*" Military discipline consists in training men to act entirely irrespective of everything but the word of command. They are *fighting machines—murdering machines.*

Every crime, moreover, committed upon an enemy, is sanctioned by the laws of war. Murder, theft, rapine, falsehood, cruelty, hate, are military virtues, and the commander rewards with laurels what God forbids on pain of eternal death. When God says "love your enemies," war says "hate them;" when God says "bless them that curse you," war says "curse them;" when God says "do good to them that despitefully use you," war says "do them all the evil in your power." Nor is this all; the *same act* which is a military virtue in the sight of one army is a capital crime in the sight of the other. The deed which procured for Andre a halter from the Americans, procured for him an immortality of fame in England. Nor do military virtues depend upon the character of the *cause* in which they are exhibited. The brave defender of a bad cause is as highly honored as the brave defender of a good one. The same monument on Durham terrace at Quebec, proclaims the virtues of Wolfe and Montcalm, who fell at the head of their respective armies in mortal combat with each other. Such is the system of morality which is essential to the prosecution of war; and I ask, what must be God's estimate of a system, which can exist only by legalizing all that he condemns? What must be the character and eternal prospects of men trained in such a school?

But this is only a fraction of the mischiefs of war. Consider next its effects upon the *nation which is the theatre of war.* Suppose the United States at war with England what would be its effect upon the morals of this nation? Our seamen would be con-

verted into legalized pirates. Our literary institutions broken up—our churches converted into quarters for hostile armies, (as was true of all the churches in this city, with one exception, in the Revolutionary war.) Thousands of our citizens deprived of all honest means of subsistence, would be left to support themselves by crime. Corruption, peculation, plunder, would be the characteristics of the times. Infidelity, intemperance, sabbath-breaking, profanity, licentiousness, reckless adventure, would burst asunder all the restraints of public opinion and of law; and a deluge of moral pollution would sweep, as with the besom of destruction, over the land. Our benevolent enterprizes would be arrested in their works of mercy and love. Our missionaries in heathen lands would fail of their supplies, and nearly all the agencies which God has set in operation for the amelioration of mankind and the spread of his glorious Gospel, would be arrested in their progress. The trump of war would sound the dirge of thousands of immortal souls.

II. While all confess that war is an evil, it is regarded by many as a necessary evil: and if necessary, *justifiable*.

I shall waste no time upon the abstract question, whether in any conceivable circumstances, war is justifiable: for at the present time the subject is a *practical* one. The question is not, whether Israel was justified in making war against Amalek, and Midian, and Canaan, in obedience to God's express and audible command. It is not whether our fathers were justified in taking up arms in defence of their liberties, nor whether the slaves at the south would be justified in taking up arms in defence of theirs. But the question is, *is war ever justifiable and necessary to settle national disputes?* Is it the proper tribunal to decide questions of right, and fix lines of boundary? To this question I shall venture to answer, *No!*

1. *National honor* does not require, but forbids such a resort.

The idea that war is necessary to sustain national honor, is precisely the idea that sustains dueling. War is only national duelling, except that it is the more atrocious as being *wholesale* murder. Suppose our title to Oregon were undisputed, which does not seem to be the fact: that England should propose to occupy it *all*, which she does not propose to do: and that she refused every other mode of settlement, which she has not done: still would a war be necessary to vindicate national honor? Would it be honorable to plunge this nation into the horrors of a war for *such a cause?* Honorable by what standard? The standard in use among duellists, assassins, and savages. In the eye of reason, and according to the standard of the gospel, it would be dishonorable and base. "Is it not disgraceful to submit to injury without seeking redress?" No! Even heathen morality answers, No! It is more honorable to suffer wrong than to avenge it. This is true of individuals and of nations. "Suppose England refusing all submission to negotiation

and arbitration, should absorb the whole territory of Oregon into her own overgrown dominions, and add, at the mouth of the Columbia river, a new morning drum-beat to the national airs with which she has encircled the earth; who then is in the attitude of the truest honor, England, who has appropriated by an unjust act what is not her own, or the United States, the victim of the injustice?"

But when the right is a *matter of dispute;* when compromise is offered and arbitration proposed, which submits our claim to the decision of an honest, competent, and disinterested tribunal; when *this* is the position in which we stand, is war honorable? If in this state of things we rush into a conflict with England, sunder all the ties that unite us to our fatherland, drench the fields of this happy country with blood, derange the commerce and endanger the peace of the world, plunge thousands of families into want and mourning, and thousands of souls into hell; I ask if ours will be an honorable position before the world—if the good and virtuous will admire our justice, our philanthropy, our magnanimity, our Christianity—if posterity will rise up and bless us for the inheritance of misery and orphanage which we bequeath them? I tell you, Nay! A brand of infamy, more disgraceful than the mark of Cain, will be fixed upon us; the whole civilized world will lift up its voice against us, for the stupendous iniquity; and the thousands made widows and orphans in our own land, will shriek their condemnation in our ears. So far from reaping a harvest of glory in such a contest, we shall call down upon our heads universal execration; and those men, whoever they may be, who shall be the responsible authors of the war, will earn an immortality of shame.

2. *National policy* forbids an appeal to arms for the settlement of this controversy.

The territory in dispute is worth, to either party, less than the expense of carrying on a war for twenty-four hours. That portion of Oregon to which we have an undisputed claim, is twice as large as the whole of Great Britain and Ireland, while that which is in dispute is comparatively worthless. For, it should be remembered, the 49th parallel of latitude does not pass through the fertile plains of Virginia and Ketucky, but through the Lake of the Woods, and the Gulf of St. Lawrence. It is 280 miles north of the northern boundary of Vermont, 150 miles north of Quebec, and nearly 100 miles north of the sources of the Mississippi river. Now if a war would give us secure possession of this territory, what sort of a bargain would it be? Let us look at the price at which it is proposed to purchase that barren and desolate wilderness. To say nothing of the millions spent in preparing for the war;—the moment that war was certain, a paralysis would seize the enterprize of this country which would cost it more than the whole of Oregon is worth. Daniel Webster declared that if it had been known in 1842, how probable it then was that war would ensue with Eng-

land, everything depending upon commerce would have been depressed one half in six hours. What then would be our condition if war were actually declared. The foreign commerce of the country (and nearly one half of it is the commerce of this single city,) would be swept from the ocean. Our ships which are abroad, whitening every sea, would be seized; those which are at home would rot at the wharves. Our storehouses and warehouses would be closed. And as it is the commerce of this city that sustains almost every other branch of enterprize, distress and bankruptcy would extend to all classes of the community. So all over the land. This, and the other great outlets and inlets of the country being closed, universal stagnation would ensue. The ten thousand wheels of industry would stop. Our thriving villages and bustling cities, would groan under commercial pressure. But while every source of revenue would be diminished at least one half, our national burdens would be increased fourfold. The annual cost of sustaining the war, with other ordinary expenses, would be, according to the recent estimate of Mr. Gallatin, not less than $77,000,000—$63,000,000 of which, would have to be extorted by taxation, from the impoverished and suffering people. To all this, we must add thousands of ships captured on the ocean and on our lakes; for our navy is but a toy compared with England's. We must add the plundering and burning of cities and villages upon our two thousand miles of sea-coast, and our extensive northern frontier. We ought to add also a thousand other items of which, in our happy ignorance of war, we are unable to conceive. And how long this struggle would last it is impossible to conjecture; for England, in the full maturity of her strength, and commanding the proudest navy that ever rode upon the ocean, is to be one combatant; and this nation, in the pride of her youth, never yet dismayed by dangers, or disheartened by difficulties, is to be the other. Saxon valor, Saxon endurance, Saxon pride, Saxon hate, being enlisted on both sides in the contest, would ensure such a struggle as modern times have never witnessed. Who can compute the value of the property, the lives, the immortal souls sacrificed in such a conflict? And *for what?* A narrow strip of bleak inhospitable wildernes, 3,000 miles off. What a bargain!

3. An appeal to arms in our controversy with England would be *useless.*

Thus far, we have supposed that our difficulties may be settled in this way. But, is this so? Suppose we should fight an hundred naval battles and as many more on land, if we were *defeated* how would the Oregon question stand then? For we are not to assume that we are to gain all the victories. England depends in war upon her regular army; and her troops, trained to the trade of war, never enquire whether they are fighting in a good cause, or a bad one. But the fighting of the United States must be done by its intel-

ligent citizens, who, when fighting for their liberties and homes, are a match for any soldiers on Earth. But who will "stand sponsors" for their bravery, when fighting against their wills, and for the barren wastes of Oregon?

The sentiment of *loyalty* has much to do in making a British soldier brave. When the Spanish Armada threatened England, the Queen rode bareheaded through the camp at Tilbury, exclaiming, "I have the body but of a weak and feeble woman, but I have the heart and stomach of a King, and I take foul scorn that Parma, or any other prince of Europe, should dare invade the borders of my realm." "And," says the narrator, "men who saw that sight, and heard that speech, would have battled to the death in her behalf, against the armies of all Europe." But loyalty is a word unknown in the dialect of Americans. For which of our brave rulers, are the peaceable citizens of this nation, ready to pour out their blood, on the field of battle. Before we calculate upon victory, let us "count the cost whether we be able with ten thousand to contend with him that cometh against us with twenty thousand."

But suppose we *were victorious*, would that settle our right to Oregon? We should only have to return to the very position from which we started, and settle the question by *negotiation* or *arbitration*. Let me ask those who suppose that a war will help us out of this difficulty, in what way fighting will decide whether the 49th or the 54th parallel of latitude is our true boundary.

Our appeal to this tribunal in 1812, ought to teach us wisdom in such matters. England claimed the right to take her seamen, though she found them sailing under the American flag. The United States denied this doctrine, and declared war to prove it false. We prosecuted the war for three years—our commerce was swept from the ocean,—our frontier villages were laid in ashes,—thousands of lives and hundreds of millions of money were expended—the capital of the nation was captured; and when peace was made, not a word was said on the subject which was the only cause of war. That question remained precisely where it was before. Thus it is that war decides questions of right. It is with nations as with individuals. The *duellist* fights till he is satisfied, and if his antagonist is alive, he must commence again where he ended, before the fight, with *negotiation*. So we may fight with England till Congressional pugnacity is satisfied; and if one party or the other be not annihilated, they must return to negotiation at last.

4. I have endeavored to show that the war which threatens us, would be *dishonorable*, *impolitic*, and *useless*. I deem it an important additional consideration that it would be *contrary to the will of the vast majority of the people of this country*.

All that I have said of the evils of war, would be true of it, if it were undertaken voluntarily, and unitedly. But to be forced into it by the recklessness of a few ambi ious men, who would be lifted

by its tumultuous waves into stations of power; would be *doubly horrible.* The great mass of the people of all parties—those who must bear the burden, endure the suffering, and do the fighting; and who have everything to lose and nothing to gain by war; are opposed to it. But if we are a self-governing people, as we profess to be, we may ask, what right have our representatives and servants, to plunge us into a war against our interests and will? And if we be a Christian nation, as we claim to be, we may ask what sort of morality it is, which compels the peaceful inhabitants of one country, to shoot and be shot by the peaceful inhabitants of another country, to gratify the ambition or revenge of their rulers?

Who then wishes that our difficulties with England should be referred to this tribunal? Not our merchants and ship-owners, for thousands of them would be bankrupt in an hour;—not the planters of the South, for the closing of foreign markets against their great staple, would be their ruin;—not the farmers of the North, who are rejoicing to see the ports of England, now opened for the first time, to their products;—not the manufacturer who depends upon foreign commerce for his materials, or his markets, for the hum of his machinery would be silenced for years;—not the poor mechanic, or day-laborer,—the carpenter, the mason, the painter, the smith, the carman, the porter, the clerk, the journeyman;—they would lose their employments, and starve in idleness, or be driven into the army, to shoot and be shot by the British, at eight dollars per month;—not the wives and mothers of our land, whose husbands and sons, in case of war, would be sacrificed upon its Moloch altars;—not the Christian, who sees in war the mightiest conceivable obstacles to the progress of Christ's cause, and the salvation of a lost world. Who is it, then, that would embroil these mighty Christian nations in war, and entail upon the forty millions of their inhabitants its untold miseries? They are a few mercenary leeches, who would fain fatten themselves upon the blood of expiring thousands;—a few aspiring military chieftains, who would be raised to the high places of power, upon the hurricane of war. They are not the thousandth part of the people, whose dearest interests are staked upon the issue of this question. Then let every friend of God and man, fearlessly lift up his voice against the contemplated iniquity, and if the curse must come, let these Ahithophels bear the responsibility, and answer for the consequences, to the God of nations.

5. The threatened appeal to arms is *entirely unnecessary.*

Many, who assent to all that I have said respecting the *evil, folly,* and *absurdity* of war, as a tribunal for the decision of disputed questions; still claim that in many cases it is necessary.

I have already said that war has no tendency to settle disputes; so far from it, it is *itself* the worst of all disputes; and every moment that it continues it renders the original breach wider and wider.—

Negotiation, which *must follow* war, should be a *substitute* for it. "But suppose the negotiation fails, what shall be the court of *last* appeal?" I answer, a court of *arbitration*. This mode of adjustment, is as rational and honorable between *nations* as between individuals. It is so pronounced by Vattel, and other writers on the laws of nations; and has often been adopted with happy results. To the adoption of this principle Switzerland owes her preservation. Had she depended, for the settlement of her disputes, upon the arbitrament of war, she had long ago been swallowed up in the devouring jaws of surrounding nations. France and Mexico have provided for the same mode of settling their controversies. But, it is said, other nations are prejudiced against us, and will not do us justice. Facts prove the opposite. We have already tried this method with advantage. A controversy between the United States and England, respecting our last treaty of peace, was decided by the Emperor of Russia in our favor, The question respecting our N. E. boundary, was referred to the King of the Netherlands, and the line proposed by him was nearly identical with that which was finally adopted. He, who in this age of the world, denies that there is justice enough, and humanity enough, and love of peace enough on earth, to secure the amicable settlement of all disputes between enlightened Christian nations,—slanders his race. He who declares the hazard of war more equitable than any other tribunal,—slanders himself.

That such arbitration in our existing controversy with England, should be declined, so long as there is hope from negotiation, is doubtless no ground for complaint, ; but if all other methods of adjustment shall *fail*, and the reference proposed by England shall then be rejected; and thus these sister nations shall be plunged into a bloody war; as surely as there is justice on earth or in heaven, so surely shall we draw down upon our heads, the execration of the world, and the curse of Almighty God.

6. Once more, let us look, for a moment, at the *moral aspect* of the contest in question.

No one can question the truth, that God holds nations responsible for their conduct as well as individuals. If any one does question it, let him read God's threatenings against Assyria, Idumea, and Egypt; and the fulfilment of those threatenings in their utter destruction; and he will question it no longer. What then will be God's estimate of the war which threatens us?

A declaration of war will mean one of these three things:—That we appeal to arms to determine our *right* to Oregon; or that we we are determined to possess the land *right* or *wrong;* or that as England has encroached upon our supposed rights, we will inflict all possible injury upon her, by way of redress.

If the *first* of this trip'et expresses our intentions, then I ask, if muskets, and cannon, and submarine batteries, are wise and impar-

tial judges of right; I ask, if the strongest regiments and the best marksmen, are sure to be on the side of justice; I ask, if might makes right? Are we heathen, barbarians, duellists, that we should avow a doctrine so monstrous? Do we live in the dark ages, that we should resort to the judicial combat? If we expect the war to determine the *right* in this controversy, we offer an insult to the conscience of the world, and to the God of Heaven.

If we intend by a war to take possession of the territory *irrespective of right*, then plainly, it is a glaring act of iniquity and wrong.

If we mean by a war to retaliate upon England for encroaching upon our rightful domains;—if, because she will not relinquish her claim to Oregon, we mean to derange her commerce, burn her ships, shoot her subjects, and do her all possible injury; I ask if this is the principle of the gospel of peace,—that gospel which says to nations as well as to individuals, "avenge not yourselves?" On whichever plea then, a resort to arms should be determined, it would be wholly opposed to the spirit of the gospel, and a monstrous iniquity in the sight of God.

Sir, as I am for the defence of the interests of Christ's kingdom, and to utter the testimony of God against every sin, I have deemed it my duty to speak to you plainly, respecting the sin of war, which now threatens us; and which would be fraught with infinite disaster to the interests of Zion, at home, and all over the world. I have endeavored to steer clear of the Scylla and Charybdis of the great political parties; and to state those principles and facts bearing upon the question, which may assist us to determine the course of our duty.

"Blessed are the peacemakers," said Christ, and *doubly* blessed, when their interests are involved both in the peace itself and the making of it. May that blessedness be ours. As we value the prosperity of the country we so much love, as we value the lives, and the souls of our brethren in this land and in England, and as we value the favor and smile of our country's God, let us use our influence, to pour the oil of peace upon the troubled waters; and invoke the God of peace, to save us from the awful scourge of war. I rejoice that the latest intelligence from England, is calculated to inspire more confident hopes of a speedy reconciliation. While therefore we should avoid needless agitation and alarm, we are not to forget that so long as this question is open, and this popular excitement lasts, war is at least *possible*. And the possibility of so tremendous an evil, should keep every Christian in earnest prayer to him, who has the hearts of rulers and the destiny of empires in his hands. If Christians in this land, will thus act and pray, we may expect that these boding clouds will speedily disperse,—that peace will continue to reign in our borders, and that we shall still be "that happy people, whose God is the Lord."

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SERMON CCCCXIX.

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THE HOUR.*

"Father! the hour is come."—John, xvii. 1.

We cannot believe ourselves mistaken in maintaining that, although every religious service should be perfumed with the odour of Christ, the service which so distinctly and affectingly records his *death*, should with especial sacredness, be consecrated entirely to such thoughts as grow immediately out of that grand subject. Surely if at any time we are to know nothing but Christ, and him crucified, this is the time. Remoter topics however important in their place, would divide attention and exhaust a portion of the energy of thought and emotion, which the great duty of the occasion, requires and deserves. Then let the first and the last thought of the soul upon this day be—the love wherewith He loved us, who gave himself for us—the more especially as the appointment upon which we are to attend, comes with the emphasis of a special injunction, "Do this *in remembrance of me.*"

In this spirit, we have now, as upon all similar occasions, selected words from the pages of sacred scripture, which directly summon us into the very midst of the wonders we commemorate. We wish, not so much to reason as to feel: not to present truth in controversy, but truth admitted, and so to present it, as to draw our souls out of the range of their ordinary associations; and from the eminence which our subject alone affords, to contemplate the most momentous realities which human history presents to our view. Such a height is the historical period of the passion of the Redeemer of men: and to reach it, let all our energies of thought, attentive thought, excited and consecrated by the Divine Spirit, be given to the deep significance which belongs to the words of our text "Father! the hour is come."

* A Communion Sermon.

Every word that drops from the lips of one who is upon the eve of some great revolution in his destiny, has a peculiar intensity; and hence every word of the most wonderful personage that ever appeared upon earth, deserves a separate attention. Viewed in this light, the words we have chosen are memorable, and will furnish meditations in harmony with the purpose to which we have dedicated this day.

It is a striking fact, that although the Redeemer in the last interviews he held with his disciples, and in the process of his arraignment and condemnation, refers in strong terms to the certainty and awfulness of the calamities he was to endure, he does not dwell upon them or even refer to them, as if for the purpose of conveying to his disciples distinct conceptions of the nature of the anticipated sufferings, or of the precise emotions with which he himself looked forward to them. We may believe indeed, that to his human nature, the precise amount and form of the trials to which his last moments were to be subjected, were unknown. To the *man* Christ Jesus, the prescience of the son of God did not necessarily belong. As the event proved, the burden of his agony—not bodily but mental—was such as to produce fearful effects; and no wonder, if, as we believe, that agony arose from the indescribable visitation of the curse due to the sins whose punishment in this mysterious form he agreed to bear. If this be so, it follows that the Saviour's anticipations of that suffering, must have been far short of the reality: for a full and clear anticipation of it, would have been equivalent to the reality. To know precisely what we may have to bear, is in fact a doubling of the pain: and in the case of the Redeemer, such a doubling of the pain, would have been unjust and impossible. Had he had a distinct apprehension not merely of the certainty, but of the precise emotions, the precise horrors which assaulted him at the moment when he cried out "My God, My God,—could he have had strength left to bear them as it were a second time.

This partly accounts for the fact, that he was at all able to turn away his attention from the anticipated suffering, the certainty, but not the full nature and degree of which he knew before-hand, and that between the bursts of his agony, he could deliver so much direction and consolation to others. And yet how terrific, though comparatively brief, were those periods of agony! Even the *anticipation*, we might suppose, would have so absorbed the soul of our Lord, as to have left no room for other thoughts. Every counsel he gave reminded him of the time; every prayer he then uttered had respect to it; on every side, he beheld remembrancers of the approaching conflict. With it in his view, he went into the very toils of his enemies, by going up to Jerusalem: with it in view, he sat down to the Passover; and during the progress of feast hewas reminded of it, by seeing one of the little band

stealing away to sell his life. In the last conversation which took place in the upper chamber, many references are made to it and how affecting the allusions to the fact which occur throughout the prayer, when he lifted up his eyes to heaven and said, "Father the hour is come."

And yet we should mistake did we suppose that when he refers (as he frequently does) to the approach of that hour, he thought of it only as a time of anguish, which could not be evaded or diminished. No, the expressions which he employs, clearly convey the idea, that, mingled with the over-shadowing darkness were gleams of a glorious light. Glory to his Father, to himself, and to his church, were ideas inseparably inwoven with the thought of suffering: so that as we cannot understand the wail of his sorrow or the exultation of his confidence, until we know *who* is the sufferer and *for what* are his sufferings—neither can we understand the trials or the triumphs of the hour, unless we view the one in the light of the other. When he refers, as he does in several instances, to the coming of *the* hour, these emotions of sorrow on the one hand, and of joy on the other, must have strangely mingled and crossed and affected each other. No passage brings this fact out more strongly than one you will find in John, 12: 27, 28.—"Now is my soul troubled,—and what shall I say? Father save me from this hour! But for this cause, came I unto this hour! Father glorify thy name." In these broken ejaculations, you have the key to the emotions of the Savior at least so far as to learn that he approached the last times of his mission, with a strange conflict, like that of one who knew that the crown however grand, must be preceded by the cross however heavy. Now joy, now agony of soul, in turns claimed the mastery. The depth of the one or the other cannot be sounded by any line of ours. But we may benefit our souls by contemplating, though at a distance, the exclusively singular experience of the Son of God, the man Christ Jesus, and try to imagine the nature of the emotions with which he cried "Father! the hour is come."

The hour is come! What hour? what causes contribute to make it worthy of being thus emphatically spoken of as '*the* hour?'

I. It was a marked hour in the chronicles of the uuiverse—because it was to be signalized by events, *for which long preparation had been made.* It was long anticipated in heaven, long predicted on earth. The worlds were made in view of it. The foreseen apostacy of the race of man created the necessity for it. The long course of sin and wretchedness which Heaven endured, was endured because God would thus demonstrate the necessity for that merciful yet righteous interference, the crisis of which had now arrived. The dark hour which beheld the first pair expelled from the Paradise in which they had been placed was relieved of some of its darkness, by the anticipation of this hour in which God was

to glorify his Son and exalt him to be a Saviour of the fallen. Heaven was glad for it, and angels looked forth over the troubled abyss where human passions were raving and slaying their victims, to the distant glory which told them that sin should not always reign unto death, but should be overcome and finally banished by him who said "the hour is come." Its coming triumphs swelled the prophetic harmonies of David, Isaiah, and other seers: its sorrows were sung by them, in plaintive notes; for these holy men of old 'testified before hand the sufferings of Christ and the glory that should follow.' Even the wicked time-server was forced to tell of the star out of Jacob, which he should behold, but not nigh. Kings reigned and were overthrown, and kingdoms swayed and fell and rose in turn, in preparation for the hour which of all others, was to be considered as "the fulness of the times." That hour was then come—when Jesus Christ, the mysterious, the humble yet the mighty, the strong yet the weak, thus stood upon the earth—to teach, to suffer, to die, and to rise again!

II. "The hour is come," as *the hour of the powers of darkness*. So did Christ himself consider it. When his foes came out against him with weapons to take him, indignation at their cowardice broke forth in the exclamation—"be ye come out as against a thief, with swords and staves? when I was with you daily in the temple, (*where* I could have appealed to all that I did no fault worthy even of rebuke) ye stretched forth no hands against me! But, as if recalling the fact that so it was permitted to be, he adds, "this is your hour, and the power of darkness," It was part of the work to be done and endured, that all things evil should be let loose upon the Son of man: evil friends, evil counsellors, evil religionists smiting in the name of God, and evil powers in dark places, with the god of this world at the head of the host, stimulating and encouraging all the others to defeat the Son of God. Could they tempt him to swerve—could they buy him by promise of worldly grandeur, or alarm him by worldly fears, and make him at last confess himself no more than man: could they stop his rebukes of sin, and his consolations for the troubled, and his pure teachings, all which threatened their long established dominion with an overthrow—how would they rejoice! The devils he cast out feared but hated him, and joined readily with infuriated men, to use the last argument of the persecutor—an ignominious death. They were permitted to work their will—because such an infliction (how far carried we cannot tell) was part of the burden which he came to bear, when he consented to endure the curse of the law.

In the temptation in the wilderness Satan was foiled. But malignity is never to be quieted however often defeated. The powers of darkness rejoiced as they beheld the toils which they had helped to weave, closing around the divine and powerful being, whose full object and the manner in which he purposed to accomplish it,

they probably did not comprehend. They knew enough to know that Christ's success would be their defeat; and hatred to him, and hatred to the world stimulated them to contend with him. Guilty beings! how little did they imagine that every blow they gave to the Son of God rebounded against their own dark empire—that every groan they extorted, was a rivet to their own chains and a severing of those in which they had helped to bind the world. The death of him they hated, was to crush the empire of the prince of the power of the air—the spirit that ruled in the hearts of the children of disobedience. Let them exult—'tis their *hour!* But only an hour. "The prince of this world cometh, said the Son of God, but hath nothing in me." "Now shall the prince of this world be cast out."

III. "The hour is come:" *the hour of terrible agonies to be endured*—foretold, foreknown, though not (as we have seen,) to their full extent; yet so far anticipated, as to fill the soul of the righteous sufferer with a dim mysterious horror even in the early parts of his history, and make him even then "a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief."

But as we have already suggested, what were the anticipations to the reality? We often indulge a dread of imaginary evils—evils which may never happen—and how keen the sufferings endured in prospect of merely possible affliction, every one can tell who reviews his own history. But though our apprehensions at the approach of a dreaded trial may be agonizing; are they equal to the agony endured when we are actually in its grasp? It is indeed heart-rending to watch the ravages of disease in the person of a dear child; the failing pulse, the bloodless cheek and unconscious eye, which portend death. But still they are not death. When *that* comes, it brings a train of emotions, before which all previous sorrow seems light. It is the dread reality of evil, which slays the comforter, sweet hope. The hour is then come: all former hours of pain are absorbed into *that*. Now as our Divine Lord possessed all the sinless affections of our nature, he was exposed to the increased bitterness which must belong to those ills which are not merely to be feared as possible, but as certain. Let us then remark, *first*, that he had none of the alleviations of hope, so far as the absolute certainty of suffering was concerned. He foreknew it as *inevitable*. It must needs be. Power itself could not remove it; skill could not evade it; pity could not soften it. The cup was there: it was full: and he who had given his princely word to drink it, must drink it—or the curse was not borne, justice was not satisfied, and therefore pardon for the condemned was not possible. Nor could it be a sweeter cup than it was—*its bitterness could not be diluted!* for guilt mingled its ingredients.—Every thing in God's universe; heaven by its love, hell by its despair, the earth by its miseries; the heart by its blasted powers—all declare that sin can never be otherwise than a curse to all who come within its range. And as

the Redeemer of men, came expressly to bear our iniquities, and to be made a curse for them, he had not only a certainty of suffering, but of suffering that could not be modified. Remark again, that it was to be *incomparable*, as well as *inevitable*. It was more than *the body's torments*—they are sharp, but endurable, for martyrs sustained by love have proved superior to them: and so would He. It was more than *the torture of wounded dignity and conscious innocence*, subjected to infamous and degrading persecutions—that has been borne without extorting the cry, Father! save me from this hour! Let this cup pass from me! It was not *the sorrow with which a view of the depravity of the world will affect a pure mind:* for that is a sorrow which none have a right to pray may be taken from them, and how can such a sorrow be supposed to justify the impassioned call, My God! why hast thou forsaken me!—It was not the *fear of being triumphed over finally*—because He must have known at least the certainty that though bowed he should not be broken. It was not, finally, *an evil conscience*—none but a conscious deceiver could have been troubled by remorse for personal crimes; and therefore, that cannot have been the cause of his agonies.

What were they then? Ask heaven—heaven cannot tell! not even he who bore the agonies can tell, because there are no terms in created language to convey them, even if there were powers to conceive them. Hell has no such sorrows as those—much less earth. For, let us remark, that here was a burden of guilt, laid upon the soul of one who was harmless of any guilt! Here was an indefinable curse of God visiting the soul of the innocent! All the sensibilities of an untainted purity were shocked to be thus set in array against God—a loving God, who though he loved, smote the Shepherd because he took the place of the sheep to expiate their offences. Oh! had it been only man that was wreaking his malignant fury against him for the rebukes he had administered, or had it even been the united hosts of Hell, let loose to try their utmost power upon our holy Lord, though the suffering might have been severe, it could never approach in bitterness the mysterious horror which overwhelmed for a season the soul of the Son of God, when forgetting all other causes of grief, he mourned the desertion of the Father. That was the darkest moment of that dark hour! All other causes of grief were but drops in the cup: this was its largest and most loathsome ingredient! He had felt the treason of Judas, and the denial of Peter, the ignominy of his arrest, the bonds and scourgings and mockings. He had felt the grief of a mother who wept at the cross where he hung: he had felt for the scattered sheep whom he was to leave alone. But these were the least of his tribulations. It was the curse—the awful visitation which bore upon him as the surety of the guilty, and of which the desertion of the light of God's face was the result—it was this which signalized the time as peculiar in the annals of sorrow. This was the sword of justice, smiting

the man that was God's fellow! Sorrow like unto which there was never any sorrow, was that with which the Lord who loved him, afflicted him in the day of his fierce anger!

How long this peculiar form of agony endured, we cannot tell. Were they but *moments* when measured by the standard of human time, they were *ages* when measured by the amount of grief that was compressed into them. For who could suffer —who had the power to bear, or the capacity to feel, like the Son of God? A glorious being! originally in the very bosom of God; dear as the apple of the eye to the Father—the adored of Heaven; the spotless and faultless! It is He who is thus deserted of Heaven and Earth! He who is scorned as a deceiver, rejected by his people, and fallen into pagan hands, so low and poor, that even the robes he wore are forfeited and parted amongst his executioners! It is He whom all men feared to come and own at that hour! so that it was not until death had closed the scene, that one timid disciple supposing the watchful malignity of his destroyers to be mitigated by their success, summoned boldness enough to beg his body for burial. It is *He, the Son of God*, who foresaw and quailed before this array of sufferings, while yet future! He who endured them all, when the hour had come!

IV. "The hour is come." The *triumphs* of the hour are now to be viewed as cousequent upon *its agonies* This is the next of the senses which are attached to the memorable words, Father! the hour is come. *It was an hour, in which should be aecomplished results which were full of glory.* As we have said, this prospect of triumph was the only thought that could render the prospect of anguish endurable by the soul of the Messiah. Suppose that our salvation could not have been secured but by the permanent sacrifice of the deliverer: that any being who could have mustered a benevolence sufficiently firm to become our atonement, must have consented to forego for ever, heaven and its happiness. I know the supposition is unreasonable and inconsistent with the justice and benevolence of God. But make it for a moment—and what being could have consented to undertake the work of Redemption, and moreover how large a portion of the joyfulness of the redeemed would have been destroyed, as they remembered that their friend was utterly lost for them. But no! God laid help upon one who was mighty, and who by his Divine endowments, sustained and qualified the pure humanity of his wonderful person, to endure the fearful passion of which we have spoken. When the tomb of Joseph shrouded that lifeless form within its dark precincts, it was but as a last, long pause before the great blow that was to break down the empire of evil. The *Son of God*, came forth *a conqueror*, from the grave into which the *son of man* had gone *conquered.* Then ended the hour of humiliation—and glory began.

This idea, that the work of humiliation was to be not only the

prelude but the very cause, of subsequent glory and triumph, is in various forms to be met with in the expressions of the Saviour himself. We learn from them that he considered it as *glorifying to God as God:* as *glorifying to the Messiah himself:* and as *glorifying to his people.* Let us consider each separately:—

1. The hour was *to glorify God as God.* For this the suffering Christ distinctly and ardently prays. "Father glorify thy name," is the final desire which seems to have tranquillized his agonized soul; for he utters it immediately after one of those periods of fearful anguish when he seemed to give way before the anticipation and cried "Father save me from this hour!" But no! glorify thyself! On the occasion of the departure of Judas, this thought seems to have filled and animated his soul—for this is his language when Judas had gone out: "Now is the son of man glorified, and God is glorified in him: and if God be glorified in him, God shall also glorify him in himself, and shall straightway glorify him." And still on another occasion, when he confidently declares in the full assurance of completing his work, "I have glorified thee on the earth, I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do."

And the meaning of this near conjunction between the sufferings of Christ and the glory which should follow, is obvious enough to us. For by the awful violence of his sufferings and death, God's justice, God's law, and the evil of opposition to God's government, were magnified in the eyes of his universe. By the patient resoluteness with which they were borne, God's benevolence and mercy are equally glorified. Christ died that salvation for unnumbered beings might be bought, upon such terms and conditions, and with such results, as would exalt the character and vindicate and make attractive the dominion of his Father. All that earth has enjoyed of true peace and purity, as well as the fulness of joy with which the souls of the redeemed in heaven are filled, declare the glory of God; but as they are the fruits of the atonement only, by that only could God have been thus glorified before saints and angels. Well might the glory of the Father be justly claimed by the Son, as at once a motive and a reward of his work of humiliation; and the hour of darkness be borne for the sake of the hour of brightness which should follow it.

2. But the hour that was come, was also associated in the sufferer's thoughts with *glory to himself* as Messiah. "Father glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee." The glory of the Father is shared by the Son, as God: but the glory of the Son as the Messiah, is peculiar. What advances the authority of God and magnifies his character generally in the eyes of men will be equally felt by Father, Son and Spirit. But it is for the Son of God alone that the peculiar glory is reserved, of having completed a mysterious and vast undertaking, under circumstances and with emotions which makes his experience unique. There is one Messiah only,

in all the universe, one only who bowed the heavens and came down, not to glorify himself by displaying the magnificence of the Creator, or the severities of the Judge, but to unite himself to frail humanity: one only who met and foiled as a man, the foes of man upon their own ground: one only who bore sin, and completed a perfect sacrifice for it: one only who had gone through the shame and horror of death, laid in the grave, and risen by his own might. His is a peculiar glory, akin to, but oh! how far surpassing, the glory of him who does good and achieves great results through the medium of his personal toil and suffering, and not merely by the easy exercise of power.

This was the joy set before him. For it he endured the cross, despising the shame! To reward it, he is now set down, God-man, at the right hand of God! The government has been laid upon his shoulders! All power in heaven and earth put at his disposal for the benefit of his people! All judgment committed to him! A right to give free pardons, and to visit by his Spirit, the abodes of guilt and sorrow, and make them happy! The peopling of Heaven—its songs of rejoicing—its unmeasured bliss, are the fruits of the travail of his soul, and he is satisfied. This is his glory! not "the glory which he had with the Father before the world was," but the superadded and especial glory which crowns him as the Captain of *salvation*—the Prince of *Peace*. With these things before him he met the terrors of atonement, not without dismay but with resolution, and counted the cross his glory, because it was the means to an end, and saying in view of all its terrors, "*The hour is come when the Son of man shall be*," not humbled, not bowed down and pierced,—that he might have said; but no, elated with the assurance of triumph, and swelling with the grand visions of a future which was to be crowded with results full of glory to God and salvation to his people, he looked at the hour of trouble, and beheld in its chaos the germs of holiness, order and peace, and said, "it is the hour when the son of man shall be *glorified!*"

3. It remains to consider it, as the hour of glory *for his people.* In the throng of interests which invested the hour with importance in the regards of Christ, did he forget his people? On the contrary, all he bore was for their sakes, and every word he utters shows how tender, faithful and constant was his remembrance of them. I lay down my life for you. Greater love hath no man than this. For you I give my flesh which is meat indeed, and my blood which is drink indeed. Ye shall be sorrowful, but your sorrow shall be turned into joy, and your joy no man taketh from you. Peace I leave with you. I will send you another Comforter. For your sakes I sanctify (i.e. devote) myself. In the world ye shall have tribulation, but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world! But it is not necessary to exhibit the proof that his people were not

forgotten in that hour. This prayer, of which our text is the beginning, has for its burden, their welfare.

Now, how does the work of Christ *glorify* his people? How was the hour that was then come associated with benefit to them? With an answer to this question we now propose to conclude, trusting that it may arouse a train of salutary reflections.

To Christ's people that hour was the hour of triumph, because—

First, It brought them into *a glorious relation*. It gave them a Father. Say rather it made God a reconciled Father. By removing the obstructions which justice and law placed in the way, it made the throne no longer the seat of judgment only; but in the avenger of law, the redeemed could now behold a Father. It removed all collision between the paternal and judicial character of God, and destroyed the sinner's fear of wrath, by meeting wrath for him. Do we believe this, dear hearer? If we do, it cannot but fill our souls with filial peace, filial reverence, filial confidence, as we say with the simplicity of childhood, "My Father, my God, and the rock of my salvation." For the possibility of such a relation we are indebted to the work of our Lord. He made it possible to say, "I go to your Father and my Father"—"Our Father who art in Heaven." He is our Father because he is "the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ," our surety. As our Creator and our Providence, he was ever a Father; but the Judge and the Father had conflicting claims, and these alone could be reconciled by Christ the Mediator.

And the benefits of this, who questions them? Lo! the broad promises which now pledge the interest, and power, and goodness, and wisdom of God for his people! None can pluck them out of our Fathers' hands: he that loveth me, shall be loved of my Father. He will in no wise cast out those who come to him in Christ. But then no man cometh to the Father, but by him. See to it that all your reference to him, be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and then God ever our Father shall comfort your heart. He will send the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, as you sit here to remember what great things he hath done for you. Then fear not little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom; and neither life, nor death, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, can separate you from the love of God, which is *through* Christ Jesus our Lord.

What a glory is this for a guilty prodigal, to be met with embraces and honours like those with which our Father greets us here! Is it a small thing to have a seat at his table? And yet brethren, though now we are the sons of God, it doth not yet appear what we shall be. Happy are the privileges of seeing God our Father now by faith; but the experience of the most loving and favoured son whom God has ever blessed, so far from having exhausted the privileges of sonship, is in truth but as the dawn to the midday.

And all this we owe to him who has given us peace with God, and who stood lifting up his eyes to heaven, and said Father the hour is come! Holy Father, I plead by the sorrows of this hour, by the glory I had with thee, and which I have laid by—by the work I am about to complete, I plead with thee, Holy Father keep through thine own name, those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one as we are. Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory. I say that the hour that witnessed such pleadings as these, was for us an hour of triumph.

Again, that hour was an hour of triumph to his people, because it gave them a *glorious condition*. It bought a new life.

The resurrection of Jesus Christ from the grave, is a pledge of the resurrection of the bodies of his people. But that resurrection alone is not what is meant when we speak of the new life which Christ's atonement secures to them. We say *secures* to them, for we are not of those who say of the atonement that it did not secure the salvation of any. It did secure the pardon and the renewal of some surely, or else we must suppose that it did not satisfy the Divine justice. It bought not only the forgiveness of sin, but a new nature. The gift of the Holy Spirit, who *creates us anew* in Christ Jesus, is the fruit of the atonement, for while Christ wrought the work of salvation *for* us, it was in the full expectation and determination that his Spirit of truth whom the Father should send in his name, should work that salvation *in* us. He bought the right to shed benign light over the darkened sinner, and holy love over the rebellious sinner, and sweet comforts over the miserable sinner, and to lift the debased sinner from the dunghill, and set him clothed in his righteousness, among princes in the heavenly places.

Of this new condition, we are to consider that it has glorious *objects*. Not of the earth, earthly—but larger and higher than those for which men toil who are busied in securing what they may eat and what they may drink and wherewith they may be clothed. When we are interested in the soul, we feel that our cares for it however weighty, are not misapplied and will not be disappointed. Now, all that Christ did and suffered, if we believe in it, cannot but magnify the importance of the soul's interest. Its health, its peace, its vigour, its comforts, and finally its salvation, were the objects for which he died, and which to the believer in his death will come to surpass all other objects. I know that it requires a struggle to keep spiritual things before the mind, while this world appeals so fondly and constantly to our senses. But, to that struggle the redeemed must give themselves, and when they do, their reward is the present consciousness that they are nobly engaged, and the future happiness of reaping the fruit of their struggle, in a state of spiritual perfection. To live with God, and upon God—this is

to secure a likeness to God, and for this Christ met the hour of agony.

But when we talk of the *objects* which engage the soul in that new condition for which it is indebted to the work of Christ, let it not be forgotten that it is not for our own souls exclusively, but for the souls of others, that our efforts are demanded. The value we affix to our own spiritual well-being is a certain measure of the value we attach to the souls of our fellow-men. If we feel little for the first, we will care little for the last. No one therefore can presume that he has been changed by the Spirit of Christ, and become a partaker of the benefits of the work we have been describing, who does not show by the zeal and liberality with which he spends and is spent for others, that he sympathizes with the Redeemer in respect to the danger and the value of the souls of other men. To *work for* them, to *teach* them, to *suffer for* them, *to bear with* them, *to send the means of salvation* to them; these are among the glorious objects of the new condition to which Christ's love has brought them. And in aiming to secure these, we are elevated—we become enlarged, and are made like to Christ himself: for these are the fruits of the travail of his soul.

And finally, of this new condition, to which Christ raises his people, in virtue of the value of his death and sufferings, consider its glory in respect not only to its objects, but its *end*. Its end is fulness of joy at his right hand, and pleasures for evermore. I must pause here—for no one can grasp this mighty theme. Contrast, is the only means by which we can aproximate to any befitting conceptions of the glory which is yet to be revealed. What this earth is, that, Heaven is not. Here, is sin—there, none. Whatever elevation the understanding can reach in this life, is little in comparison with the mental scope which belongs to the perfection of our being. Whatever dignity we may attain, however famed for greatness or goodness, there is an honour of surpassing majesty in reserve for us who have begun to walk by faith. We are mean at our highest estate upon earth, for the littleness of sin will still cleave to us; but the lowest seat in glory is high as heaven. So likewise none of our present joys, however pure, are without alloy, for they are crossed and thwarted by the sins of others or our own sins. But who can tell what joy is reserved for those who are to sit with Christ upon the throne which he has raised in heavenly places?

Remember this, that the nearest approach we can now make to the condition of perfect blessedness, is through the medium of sanctification. To become more holy is the only way in which we can enjoy heaven before we reach it. To conquer sin, to become superior to its charms, to find that we are growing more earnest in our detestation of its seductions, to feel resolved not to be its slaves in any form; this is a condition of the soul, which as it is the best

earnest of heaven, so it is its best foretaste. All knowledge of God that comes not through the practical medium of purity, is a vain knowledge. To understand some things, we must *be* them. To understand purity we must be pure. Such only can see God.

And now, dear brethren, what more shall I say? You are coming to testify that you believe these things. Happy are ye, if ye do them. If not in outward form only, but in spirit, you take your places here in the presence of Him who bore the pangs of the hour of atonement, in order that he might triumph over sin and death for you, you shall be conformed to his death. It is in vain that he endured the cross, so far as you are concerned, if you do not comprehend and feel that it is by a contrite and humble penitence—by a solemn and abiding reverence for law—by a deep and heart-affecting view of grace—by cherishing love to God and man, that you are to furnish evidence of being sharers in the grand results which he agonized to effect. Short of this you cannot know the love of God which passeth knowledge—you cannot benefit by this privilege.

The day which is to try all hearts is at hand; and to the mourning people of God, tempest-tossed and weary of sin, it shall be a day of triumph. Do you long for it? Is it to prepare yourselves to meet it—is it to qualify yourselves for its inquests, that you come to the house of God, and take a place at the table of Christ? Happy humility! happy sorrow, which weans us from this life and makes us sick of sin, for *here* speaks the Comforter in mercy saying, earth has no sorrow which Christ cannot cure.

SERMON CCCCXX.

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CHARGES TO THE RICH.

"Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not high-minded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy; that they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate; laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life. I. Tim. vi. 17, 19."

Them that are rich—that have abundance. Though we cannot define the term *riches* with any certainty, yet the term *abundance* will suffice for all practical purposes with such as candidly own the truth. To others we expect not to present a charge, even from God, with much hope of success.

Charge them that are rich. We say, as a judge of Israel once said to a king of Moab, "I have a message from God unto thee." And the command of God to us is, "whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear." "To you, O men, do I call; and my voice is unto the sons of men." The Lord hath spoken—*Charge them that are rich.* The Lord does not say, "Let them alone, for there is no hope." But he says, *charge them*—evidently to do them good, and call them to the noble and god-like work of doing good. Had he determined absolutely to destroy them, he would send them no warning. But inasmuch as he says, *charge them*, we may believe it possible that they may obtain mercy. The fact also that a few rich men have obtained mercy encourages the hope, that a charge to the rich may not be in vain. And the words of the Saviour encourage us still farther, as he says, "That which is impossible with men, is possible with God." Hope, therefore, a little hope there is, of reaching them that are rich in this world. Hear, then, hear ye that are in prosperity, for God has not passed you by: it is possible that your souls may live—barely possible—so that good tidings may reach even to you, the most inaccessible of all human beings, of whom the God of truth once said, "It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the Kingdom of God." Despair not, however, for "with God all things are possible.' He sends a message unto you.

But the charge must be delivered in the name of the Lord; it must be heard and regarded; and then your souls shall live, and your riches shall be a blessing to yourselves and to the world.

CHARGE THEM THAT ARE RICH IN THIS WORLD,

1. *That they be not high-minded.* Lofty thoughts do not become men, who have nothing but what they have received. Nor

does pride suit the condition of those who come from the dust, and claim affinity with worms, and soon return to dust again. It is unfit to assume lofty airs in comparison with others, when even a beggar may be more highly esteemed among the holy angels. Be not *high-minded.* Was not the highest among the angels condemned for his pride? Were not he and his host cast down into Tartarus to punish their pride? Are not men cautioned not to be lifted up with pride, lest they fall into the condemnation of the devil? Let the rich, therefore, *be not high-minded.* You condemn pride in others: condemn it also in yourselves. You know that humility is a precious gem, that sparkles with gentle lustre in every lowly bosom: let it be so splendid in yours as to outshine all the gems of your riches. *Be not high-minded,* "but be clothed with humility." You will find this robe set very easy and pleasantly upon you, though it be not very easy to put it on and to keep it on at all times. When you look round upon your houses and lands, your flocks and herds, your attendants and equipage, and, at the same time, know the abundance of your silver and gold, or the securities which you hold for the same, how can you, without deep humility, forbear to say, "my hand has gotten me this wealth?" How can you forbear comparing yourself with others, and thinking more highly of yourself on account of your superior possessions? Will you not flatter yourself because of your means of distinction? Will you not be liable to spurn from you the applicant for relief? As did once a man of the house of Caleb, who said to the servants of David, "There be many servants now-a-days, that break away every man from his master." How different was the conduct of the Prince of Uz, who said, "If I did despise the cause of my man-servant, or of my maid-servant, when they contended with me; what then shall I do when God riseth up, and when he visiteth, what shall I answer him? Did not he that made me make him? And did not one fashion us? So do all the rich feel, when they are not high-minded. They consider themselves to be but dust and ashes, as Abraham said before God. They know that they are by nature children of wrath even as others. They know that all they possess belongs to the Lord, and that he alone maketh them to differ from others. And they know that they will soon lay their heads in the dust and to go to the world of spirits, as destitute and as naked as the poorest among mortals. They are therefore deeply humbled; and they are also jealous of themselves, lest they should be deceived by their abundance, and finally perish with their riches. To such, we know, the charge will be welcome, *be not high-minded.* How much soever some of the rich may spurn at the charge, given them in the name of the Lord, or be disposed to say, Let every man mind his own business; such as Job will welcome both the message and the messenger. With such, there may be some hope of prevailing in the charges which follow. And though

it is painful to part with such as remain high-minded, yet we have little hope in regard to them, and fear that they will not hear till the voice of the Master shall say, "Give account of thy stewardship; for thou mayest be no longer steward."

Again—CHARGE THEM THAT ARE RICH IN THIS WORLD:

2. *That they trust not in uncertain riches.*—Every one as naturally trusts in something as a vine clings to a tree. And as various objects present themselves to our reach we are prone to entwine our affections around them and trust in them. As "money answers all things," so are men prone to trust in it. "The rich man's wealth is his strong city." He has the means to build and to plant, to increase a profitable income and supply himself, his friends and dependants with all that money can purchase. If his fields bring forth abundantly, so that he has no place to bestow his fruits and his goods, he can pull down his barns and build greater. Then he can say, and he naturally will say, "Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years: eat, drink and be merry." This is one way to trust in riches. But how soon was it said to him, "Thou fool, this night shall thy soul be required of thee: then whose shall those things be which thou hast provided?" Does not such an example say to the rich man, *Trust not in uncertain riches?* Uncertain in this case, because the steward is suddenly put out of his stewardship, and leaves all his wealth unto others.

Another rich man "adds house to house and joins field to field," not so much for the purpose of furnishing a supply that he may eat, and drink and be merry, as for the purpose of accumulation. His insatiable desire increases with his means. And, as his object is not to enjoy, but to gain, he is like vessels always full, and always enlarging. All that he wants is not a supply, but a larger vessel. Of such an one Solomon says, "What hath a man of all his labor, and of the vexation of his heart, wherein he hath laboured under the sun? For all his days are sorrows, and his travail grief; yea, his heart taketh not rest in the night. This is also vanity." *Trust not in uncertain riches.* Uncertain in this case, because they do not allow a man to enjoy what he has for any valuable purpose, or to lay them out for any desirable end. "What profit is there, only in the beholding of them with his eyes?"

Instead of trusting in uncertain riches the charge is, to *trust in the living God.* We are dependent, and, in the nature of the case, we must trust in something. When we withdraw our confidence in one vanity it should not be that we may confide in another. Therefore should the rich, as well as others, *trust in the living God.* In regard to all things, and also at all times, should every one trust in the living God. In him trust the care of the soul and all our spiritual interests. But in this connexion we are to regard

specially the supply of all things, for which riches may be deemed a substitute. Instead of trusting in uncertain riches for such things as we need in this life, trust in the living God, who is the high Possessor of heaven and earth. How much more rational is it that we trust in the first cause of all things, than in secondary, and dependent causes! "Better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in man. Better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in princes." The Saviour says, "Consider the lillies of the field—Consider the fowls of the air." "Take no thought." As the Apostle expresses it, "Be careful for nothing; but in all things by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God." In the spirit of these divine counsels the pious Payson said with true faith, "I would ask God to give me a world if I needed it, just as readily as I would ask for a straw." How much more reasonable is it to trust for supplies in the exhaustless fountain, than to trust in a broken cistern; in infinite wisdom, than in human folly; in unchangeable goodness, than in the caprice of fallible man? It may be more difficult for the rich than for the poor to trust in the living God, because their houses and lands, their flocks and herds, their silver and gold, block up the way to God. But it is not less needful and essentially necessary, For they are as really dependent, and can do nothing without the living God. Hence must they break through all barriers, and overcome all obstacles, that they may come to the living God, and repose upon his paternal bosom, while they cast all their cares upon him—the unspeakable privilege of the poor and needy, and the only safety and security of the rich. Trust in the living God: for in so doing, your riches are just as available, while you are entrusted with them; and, if they leave you, or you leave them, the living God is your portion. Therefore trust in the living God, who giveth us all things richly to enjoy.

Farther—CHARGE THEM THAT ARE RICH IN THIS WORLD.

3. *That they do good.*—It becomes us to say to the rich, ye are the Lord's stewards. "Moreover, it is required in stewards that a man be found faithful." Ye are not proprietors and lords, but stewards. Not a penny is your own absolutely, though entrusted with you for a season, to answer the purposes of the owner.

It has been well said by some one, that "the whole gospel is a vast system of giving." God, the Father, gave his only begotten Son. God, the Son, gave himself. God, the Father, gave the Spirit to the Son, when he ascended up on high, led captivity captive, and received gifts for men. God, the Son, gives the Spirit to his disciples. God, the Holy Ghost, gives a new heart and all the Christian graces. So all things in this world are freely given to us of God; and to crown all, the Saviour says to his flock, "I give un-

to them eternal life, and they shall never perish." God's people partake of his Spirit, and they too are of the giving sort. As Jesus said unto his disciples, "Freely ye have received; freely give." And he was accustomed to say, "It is more blessed to give, than to receive." Need we marvel, then, that the converts, under the effusion of the Holy Spirit, were so ready to give? They sold their possessions and goods, and imparted them to all men, as every man had need." They did so because they were full of the Holy Ghost. For the same reason the churches of Macedonia were so liberal—the grace of God was bestowed upon them. In this system, every one is expected to give "as God has prospered him." The widow of her penury, casts in two mites; and all the rich, of their abundance, cast in much. And those who have neither silver nor gold, give such as they have. Some give themselves to be the Lord's servants, and wait on Him continually in the work of the gospel ministry. We have heard of a widow, who gave her three sons to this service; and of a father, who gave his son, as a foreign missionary, and the means to support him. The rich are therefore specially enjoined to do good, if they would belong to the Christian system. For although a man may give all his goods to feed the poor, and his body to be burned, and yet be destitute of charity; yet "if a man have this world's goods, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?" Tell, if ye can, ye that are rich in this world, and shut up your bowels of compassion from the needy. We know not how such a thing can be, if the love of God be in you.

Not only are ye to do good, as all men should do, but as ye are rich in this world, ye are to be *rich in good works*. That is, be abundant in good works. One thing corresponds with another. To whom much is given, of them will much be required. The appropriate use of wealth is to be *rich in good works*. In such a world as this, while the rich look around and behold their abundance, they may look around and behold a multitude, that need their liberality. God has provided for them so that they shall never want for opportunity to do good. The poor, the idle, the vicious are under their eye. But they are the poorest of mankind, who know not the glorious gospel of the blessed God. With such a multitude you are not required to scatter abroad your Master's goods, as did the fabled Fortune, standing on a round stone, blind, throwing handfuls among the people. Such is not the christian method of doing good. But with eyes open, and mind discriminating must you, that would be rich in good works, bestow the bounties of your Lord. Relieve the pressing wants of the needy; provide employment for the idle; apply means to reclaim the vicious; and send forth the treasures of the gospel to such as are perishing for lack of knowledge.

As Christ commands us to preach the gospel to every creature,

and as man must go to preach and carry Bibles and other good books, so must they be sustained in the work. Thus the Apostles went forth "to turn the people from darkness to light and from the power of Satan unto God." While thus employed they were sustained, partly by their own manual labor, and partly by the contributions of the churches. The heathen then were as the heathen now; selfish, blind, sottish, and regardless of the wants of the ministers of Christ. Hence, Paul labored with his hands among the Corinthians, to sustain himself and his fellow laborers, when preaching the gospel to them at the first: but afterwards he said, "I robbed other churches to do you service." The Macedonians and others sent to his relief both at Corinth, and in other places. How blessed is the service now, when such as you are *rich in good works*, and sustain the faithful missionary, in his self-denial, his toil, his suffering, while wasting away his strength, his little all, and his life, to save the people that are ready to perish! Be ye *rich in good works*. And, if ye equal not the Lord Jesus Christ, "who though he was rich, yet for our sakes became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich;" yet, just in proportion as ye are *rich in good works*, do ye follow in his steps, and make those rich in the grace of salvation, who are now poor, and would perish but for your aid. Precious privilege do ye enjoy, in that ye may be able, by a wise and faithful use of your abundance, to aid in winning souls to Christ, through the labors of fainting missionaries, whom ye sustain.

Another beautiful quality does the Apostle depict in the character of such as are rich in good works—*Ready to distribute*. Following the apostolic direction to lay by in store, as God has prospered you, never can a call be made upon you at an unseasonable time. You need not expect the Master to call in person, but he sends his servants. And you can say, as said the Rev. John Newton, "not a man knocks at my door, but I think that God sent him. And if he calls for aid in the Master's cause, he will find you ready. You will not say, "go, and call again." But you will cheer both his heart and your own, by a ready distribution of so much as you think and he thinks the Master requires for that particular object. How beautiful the expression, *Ready to distribute*.

But there is another expression which is no less beautiful and is found often in connexion with the offerings made for the service of the Lord—*Willing to communicate*. In the wilderness God invited such as were *willing*. David, after stating to his people that he had given, because he had set his affection to the house of his God, asked, "Who then is willing to consecrate his service this day unto the Lord?" And on the day of pentecost and afterwards under the influence of the Holy Ghost, how cheerfully did the people offer their substance for the relief of the needy! So, if you be rich in good works, and possess all the qualities, which the Lord requires and loves, you will be *willing to communicate* You will

not be angry, or put on a forbidding air; but you will win the love of God and man by cheerfulness. "For the Lord loveth a cheerful giver." This is the way to be RICH IN GOOD WORKS; ever to give abundantly, readily and willingly. Thus every donation will increase "the riches of your liberality."

Nor is this all.—CHARGE THEM THAT ARE RICH IN THIS WORLD.

4. *That they lay up in store for themselves a good foundation.*

Beloved, God does not intend that you, who are rich in this world, should receive all your good things here. He would have you enjoy a richer treasure, dwell in more splendid palaces, feast upon more delicious food, be enrobed in more elegant apparel, be engaged in more magnificent operations, and enjoy better company and a sweeter felicity. And that you may not be ruined by your abundance, but turn all to the best account, he condescends to give you his heavenly counsel. Use not all now, but lay up in store a good foundation against the time to come, that ye may lay hold on eternal life.

The time to come is the eternal world. Millions of ages after the close of this earthly state, and the burning of this world, the time to come will be—when not an atom shall remain of your riches in this world, then will you need,

A good foundation.—"A certain good; happiness firm and stable." Are there those who seek *a good foundation*, on which their surplus treasures may rest in this world? Do they enquire about public stocks? Do they ask, what stocks have the best foundation? Such inquiries are judicious: for no man wishes to invest money in stocks, which are liable to explode in a few days—and, many wish to invest all their property in real estate. For lands will not make wings and fly away, while buildings are consumed, and banking institutions fail. So God orders us to charge the rich to *lay up for themselves in store a good foundation against the time to come.* A good foundation indeed, in a world which shall never pass away! In a world, "where moth and rust do not corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal." Of this the Apostle Peter says, "It is an inheritance, incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation, ready to be revealed in the last time."

Laying up in store.—It is not wrong to lay up in store a good foundation against the time to come. Only let the time be eternity, and the foundation "a certain good, happiness firm and stable."—Lay up in store as much as possible. But how is this to be done?

We answer, by the use you make of your riches. As said the

Savior "Make to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness; that when ye fail, they may receive you into everlasting habitations." In order to this there must be exchanges; for your gold and silver, and houses and lands, and such other items of wealth as are current and available in this world, will not pass in heaven. Not because they, who dwell in that better country, do not know the value of your earthly treasures, like the savage islander, who valued a knife more than a twenty thousand pound bank note: but because they know too well the inferior quality of your treasures. God is indeed bringing the glory and honor of the nations into his holy city, New Jerusalem; but as he has no need there of such treasures as constitute your wealth here, it will be of no use to think of presenting any thing you have in its present form. But as a man, going into a foreign country, makes exchanges and procures money, which is current in that country; so must the rich do, who would lay up in store a good foundation against the time to come. They must now be negociating exchanges. As it is written, "He that hath pity on the poor, lendeth unto the Lord, and that, which he hath given, will he pay him again." Prov. 19, 17. This is the method of effecting exchanges between earth and heaven. The Lord, the owner of all you have as stewards, promises to pay you again, in the currency of heaven, all that you expend, according to his will, in showing mercy to the poor, and the perishing in this world. Feed the hungry, clothe the naked, preach the gospel to the destitute, relieve all manner of distress, or give even a cup of cold water to any one out of regard to Christ, and you will by no means lose your reward. Be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate, and, when Christ comes, he will pay you again "good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over."—This is the promise of God. If you like the security you will engage largely and liberally and immediately in the work of negociating exchanges, so that you may *lay hold on eternal life.* So are we to encourage the rich to do, not as the sole object at which they should aim. For they, as well as others, are bound to glorify God as their supreme end, and love their neighbour as themselves. But they may seek their own good too, even eternal life. And though they are not to purchase eternal life, but receive it as a free gift through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ; yet, as they are entrusted with their Lord's goods, they must use them according to his will, or they will fail of eternal life. So did a rich young man once, who enquired very earnestly and respectfully of Jesus, what shall I do that I may have eternal life? But when Jesus told him to sell all he had and give to the poor, the young man went away sorrowful.

The expression in the text denotes danger—*that they may lay hold on eternal life*—the danger is of failing to lay hold. As when an object is presented to us and comes within our reach, but we are so heedless, or rebellious, or have our hands so full of other things,

that we fail of seizing it at *once*, when we may, and thus lose it for ever. So is eternal life to every one, but especially to the rich. God in the offers of his grace, presents eternal life to every one of us through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, and says, "Strive to enter in at the strait gate; for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in and shall not be able." But what does he say to the rich?—Well were the disciples astonished above measure, when he said, "It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God." In the parable of the sower he gives the reason—"The cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the lusts of other things choke the word, and it becometh unfruitful." Hence does he represent the salvation of the rich as a *bare possibility*. "It is impossible with men; but with God all things are possible." Hence the need of charging the rich to use their wealth so that they may *lay hold on eternal life*. We are not to tell them to expect eternal life on any conditions different from other men. We promise them not eternal life, because they use wealth liberally, or even "if the give all their goods to feed the poor." On the contrary, they have a more difficult task than other men. For while they must be born again, or not enter into the kingdom of God; and repent, or perish; and believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, or never see life: they are encompassed with the cares of this life, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the lusts of other things, which render it next to impossible that they should ever be saved. They must deny themselves in the midst of all the means of gratification. They must crucify the flesh with the affections and lusts, while their abundance, their friends and the cares of this world combine to pamper the flesh with its affections and lusts. They must look at the things, which are not seen, through the splendour which cluster thick around them, and dazzle their eyes. They must hear the still, small voice of God, calling to their conscience, amid the clamors of the gay, the thoughtless, and the pleasure-loving world. And, "while worldly fancy feeds on golden dreams," and flatters them that "to-morrow shall be as this day, and much more abundant," and another time, "a more convenient season."—Alas! Alas! how can the rich *lay hold on eternal life*? Is it possible for them with their eyes, ears, hands and heart full, and more still pressing for their acceptance. to lay hold on an object, so difficult to seize, and to hold, as eternal life? Will they be induced to part with all they have, if the Lord demand it? How can they bear to hear him say to them as to the lovely young man, referred to before, "Go and sell all that thou hast and give to the poor, and come take up the cross and follow me."—"He went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions"—*great possessions!* He kept his great possessions for a season, but lost his soul for ever. Surely, if any in a christian land need our sympathy, they that are rich need it. Their souls are as *precious* as

the souls of others. Others are in danger and can be saved with great difficulty. What then will become of the rich? They can hardly be saved. The Lord Jesus pitied, while he warned them. The apostle, Paul, warned them, and urged Timothy to charge them to lay hold on eternal life. The apostle, James, cried out to them, saying, "Weep and howl!" O, my soul, "Envy not the rich," but as God bids, charge them not to trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us all things richly to enjoy; that they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate; laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life.

If you are unconverted, your wealth is "a wall to keep you out of heaven." It is a car, to roll you easily and speedily down to hell. Would you ever be converted, now receive the Lord Jesus gladly as did Zacheus. Then, like him, quietly give the half of your goods to be rich in good works, or some proportion equally acceptable to God. And, if you have gained any thing unjustly, be prompt in making restitution. Thus will the Lord say of you, as he did of him, "This day is salvation come to this house.

If you profess to be Christians, and yet are not possessed of the spirit enjoined in the text, we leave you with the words of the Apostle James, "What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? Can faith save him? If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, and one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body, what doth it profit? Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone."

POINTING THE ARROWS.

The celestial armory is well supplied with weapons. They are not carnal but spiritual. They are of etherial mould, and of divine workmanship.—When well directed, they pierce the heart and wound the conscience. They are the arrows of the Almighty and when they are made to strike fast in the soul, their wounds are deep, their poison drinketh up the spirits of men, and constrains them in the agony of their aching hearts to hasten to the Great Physician for balm to heal their wounds. Unlike all other arrows and wounds, they have a blessed design and wonderful efficacy.

There is a class of men—soldiers of the cross—who are specially appointed to this celestial archery, whose solemn business it is to go in the name of heaven's King to his armory, where are stores of

inexhaustible abundance laid up ready for use, and to select and draw out the sharpest, choicest arrows, and to use them with divinest skill. Some of these archers are expert marksmen. They are so chiefly in their choice of the arrows. They show an admirable acquaintance with the armory, and select with great care and labor those weapons which are best suited to do execution. They desire above all things to acquit themselves as soldiers of the cross, and gain the approbation of the Great Captain of salvation.

Some years ago there lived a very skilful archer. His name was Payson. He was mighty in handling spiritual weapons. He was greatly familiar with the celestial armory. You would think he had spent all his days in examining the etherial temper and divine workmanship of the weapons in that inexhaustible storehouse. He could select and draw out the arrows with wonderful skill. When he drew his bow, the arrows flew thick around, and there are many still alive who remember his skill, and how they were sorely wounded, and have been joyfully healed. But even he, with all his skill, often confessed his impotence. There seemed to be something wanting. He felt it, and mourned over it, with deep feeling, and with a heart gushing with sorrow. He seems at length to have discovered the true cause and left it on record. We read it the other day, and such is its almost immeasurable importance, that we copy it for the serious and prayerful consideration of the many whom it concerns. He said, "It will be found, I doubt not, in the coming world, that ministers had much less share in the success which attended their labors than is now supposed. It will be found, that if they drew the bow, the prayers of christians pointed and guided the arrow." If, then, the gospel fails of success in any church, if there are no revivals, no conversions, no inquiring sinners, no presence and power of the Spirit, no quickening influence, no effects from the weapons of truth which fly from the archer's quiver from Sabbath to Sabbath, let the Christians in that church lay it to heart, that it is because their prayers do not "point and guide the arrows." Here, perhaps, may be found the sad and guilty cause for the long and gloomy dearth of revivals which now afflicts the churches of our land.

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SERMON CCCCXXI.

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AN APPEAL TO THE CHURCHES ON THE LOW STATE OF RELIGION.

"Because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold."
Matt. xxiv. 12.

Our blessed Savior here speaks of the destruction of the city of Jerusalem. He tells his disciples that it will be a time when the world will rise up against them—when all kinds of iniquity will prevail among men, and when the persecutions, temptations, and trials in the Church, would induce many professed Christians to turn away from God, fall into the general current of iniquity, and either entirely apostatize from religion, or become cold and dead in their profession. He gives us a lamentable description of the state of the Church, under the influence of the general corruption of the times; and this description of the Savior is not only applicable to the time of which he speaks in connection with the words of the text, but to many of the subsequent periods in the history of the Church, when she had fallen into the same state. The Church, notwithstanding her high and holy character, and the zeal and activity which she should always manifest in the service of her Master, is liable to fall into a low and languishing state. She is here in a world of sin and wickedness, exposed to temptations, and easily led astray. She is drawn away from God, and brought into conformity with the world. She loses her holy character—her spiritual life, and becomes cold and dead. And when the Church is brought to this low and languishing condition, it becomes the duty of Christians to inquire into it, and see what are the causes which have produced this state of things, so that they may apply the necessary remedies, and save themselves and the Church from the ruin with which they are threatened. Let us then consider this subject—let us consider it seriously and solemnly—let us examine into our lives—let us search our hearts—for it must be acknowledged, that there is cause for deep and thorough *heart-searching*, in view of the low state of religion

among us. Iniquity is abounding—sin is increasing—it is becoming bolder and waxing stronger every day; and while all this is going on, Christians are becoming weaker, the love of many is waxing cold, the energies of the Church are so feeble, and the influence of Christians so little exerted, that they scarcely produce any effect.

What then are the *causes* of this low state of religion amongst us—this spiritual deadness in the Church, this inefficiency and want of zeal, this backsliding, and falling away of Christians? I have heard some say, we cannot *always* have a revival—there must be a time of coldness. God has withdrawn the influences of his Holy Spirit, and we cannot expect that religion should flourish among us now, as it did when we had these influences. In this way, some people account for the low state of religion—they charge it upon God; they say it is because he has withheld the influences of his Holy Spirit. But is this not charging God foolishly? Is it not charging Him with an unwillingness to give his Holy Spirit? And is this true? Is he not willing to give his Holy Spirit, and *more willing* to *give* than we are to *ask* it? God is always ready and willing to pour out his Holy Spirit, and the low state of religion is not owing to any indisposition on his part to grant that influence which is necessary to support and preserve spiritual religion in the heart. It is owing to the indisposition of Christians to receive that spiritual and divine influence which God is ready to impart to them. *They do not ask for it.* They do not pray for it as they ought. They do not feel the necessity and importance of such an influence. They are not in a situation to receive it, and consequently they cannot enjoy it. Religion languishes and dies in their hearts. God is always ready to work, but he works by *means*. It is his will and design, that his people should work with him—that they should pray, and labor, and render sacrifices, that his work may go on. And when the professed people of God are unwilling to work in this way, when they grow weary and faint, and turn away from the Lord unto their idols, when they restrain prayer, when they leave the work which the Lord has given them to do in his vineyard, and follow after the world and its vanities, and forbidden pleasures, the work of the Lord will cease. The windows of heaven will be shut up, and the Holy Spirit will no longer descend, to refresh, and enliven, and animate the hearts of Christians. They will lose their interest in religion, and they will pine away and die in their sins. In this way God withholds his Holy Spirit, and suffers religion to decline in the hearts of his professing people. He suffers them to go on in their sins, and pursue their own evil ways. In this way an entire church is sometimes given up to the spirit of delusion. Whole congregations and communities are ready to perish under this awful judgment of God, for their sins; and yet they do not seem to be sensible of their danger. O that

God might open the eyes of his backslidden people, and show them wherein they have sinned against him!

Another cause of the low state of religion in the Church, is *the carelessness of so many professing Christians in reading the Bible, and meditating on divine truth.* Go into many of our Christian families, and you will find the tables covered with books and pamphlets, and works of fancy, designed for the entertainment of a certain class of readers, without any regard to their religious improvement. These books are eagerly sought after, read in the family, and provided for the entertainment of visitors, when the Bible is neglected, and its sacred truths kept out of view. The Bible is the great means which God has given for preserving and promoting spiritual religion in families, and in the Church. For this purpose, it should occupy the chief place in every family. It should be faithfully read and studied every day. Christ says, "Search the Scriptures, for in them ye think ye have eternal life, and they testify of me." The Bereans were commended, because "they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the Scriptures daily, whether these things were so;" therefore many of them believed. And this is every Christian's duty. He must search the Scriptures—he must read his Bible every day; read it seriously, prayerfully, so that he may derive instruction and benefit from it. If he neglects this, he neglects the very means which God has given him for his improvement in religion. If he neglects his Bible, he will soon lose his interest in religion. He cannot go forward in the work. The Psalmist says, "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path;" and if we have not this lamp and this light, we shall soon be left in the dark, and lose our way. And it is by not paying sufficient attention to this light, that so many professing Christians lose their way. It is this that causes so many to stumble and fall in the Church; and it is in consequence of this, that the Church has so often reason to mourn over the low state of religion—the errors and offences—the wanderings and backslidings of so many of her members.

When people do not *read* the word of God, they have no desire to hear it *preached*. They neglect the public worship of God in the sanctuary, absent themselves from the ordinances, and feel no interest in the religious meetings of their brethren, for their spiritual improvement. This is usually the case with persons who neglect the Scriptures and the worship of God at home. They feel no interest in the public worship of God, and when they attend religious meetings, it seems more from constraint than from a willingness to be benefited and improved. This is also a cause of a low state of religion in many of our churches.

The next cause of the low state of religion among us, which I would mention, is *the want of brotherly faithfulness in members of the Church towards each other.* Christians should take a deep interest in each other's spiritual welfare. They are bound toge-

ther by the most sacred ties. They should love each other as brethren, as members of the same spiritual family. They should always be united in the closest harmony and friendship; and when differences occur among them, they should immediately seek to become reconciled upon the principles laid down in the Gospel of Christ, Matt. xviii. 15–17. They should never indulge in any unkind and bitter feeling. They should never think of publishing each other's faults among men, or resorting to the world for the settlement of their difficulties; 1 Cor. vi. 1–7. For, whenever they do so, they go out of the way prescribed in the Gospel; they violate the law and commandment of Christ, and they bring dishonor on the Christian profession. All differences among Christians should be settled upon Christian principles; upon the principles asserted by the Apostle, that the saints shall judge the world; that Christians are the most proper persons to judge between their brethren, and that we should rather suffer wrong, than to contend before the world, and cause the wicked to blaspheme. This is the *spirit* in which all differences among Christians should be settled; and it is because there are so many professing Christians who are unwilling to be governed and directed by this spirit—so prone to indulge their selfish feelings—so unwilling to receive Christian counsel and advice, and so determined to have their own way, that religion suffers, and the cause of God languishes in so many Christian communities. Christians should feel such a deep interest in each other's welfare, they should have such a love and regard for each other, as faithfully to observe each other's conduct; and when they see anything that is wrong, anything hurtful to the soul of an individual, or injurious to the cause of religion, they should admonish one another, for God has commanded the Christian, "Thou shalt in any wise rebuke thy neighbor, and not suffer sin upon him." We should honestly and faithfully admonish and reprove one another for the errors and offences which we commit; and it is the want of this faithfulness among professing Christians, this want of interest in the welfare of our brethren, this proneness to selfishness, an unforgiving disposition and worldly temper in the Church, which has done more injury to religion than all other causes combined.

Such are the causes of the low state of religion. These causes exist among us. We see their sad effects, and feel their deleterious influence. We see how iniquity abounds, and the love of many is waxing cold: how the ways of Zion mourn, and how few come to her solemn feasts. How Christians forsake the assembling of themselves together, and how they are neglecting their Christian duties, falling from their steadfastness, and giving themselves away to a worldly spirit. We see how the cause of God is languishing in our midst—how religion is diminishing in our own hearts, how we are carried away by the spirit of the times. The reason is, we do not pray as Christians *ought* to pray, especially at such a time as this. We do not call upon the name

of the Lord with that earnestness and perseverance which are required. We do not agonize in prayer; we do not lay hold of the horns of the altar, and cry mightily to God, and wrestle with him, as his servants did, who prevailed. We do not read the Scriptures, and hear the word of God, and love and meditate upon it, as we ought to do. We are not faithful enough to each other as Christian brethren. We fall into sin, and backslide, and bring reproach upon the cause of Christ; and we suffer each other to go on, without laboring with each other and admonishing and reproving one another, as it is our solemn duty to do.

And now, in view of these causes, how ought we to *feel*, and what ought we to *do?* I answer,

1. In view of the low state of religion among us, and the causes which led to it, we ought to feel deeply humbled. It is not a light matter, which should pass over with a confession of sin, such as we are accustomed to make, and then think we have done all we can do, and is our duty to do. No, we have arrived at a crisis in the Church which should awaken deep feeling in every heart; we have turned away from God; we have grievously backslidden; we have fallen into open sins, which have brought dishonor on religion, opened the mouths of gainsayers, and made us a reproach and by-word before the world. And now God is ready to come out in judgment against us. He is already chastening us with his sore displeasure. It would almost seem that his Spirit had departed from us, and that he had given us up as a prey to the enemy. Difficulties and trials are coming upon us from every quarter, and roots of bitterness are springing up to trouble us in every direction; and if the Lord do not stretch forth His hand and save us, we must eventually perish. Such is our state; O that we might all realize it, O that every member of the church might *see* and *feel* the awful crisis we have reached! We would then feel like Nehemiah, when he said, "Why should not my countenance be sad, when the city, the place of my father's sepulchres, lieth waste, and the gates thereof are consumed with fire." Like Esther, the queen, when she fasted and prayed for the deliverance of her people, and entered into the presence of the king and sought relief. Like the priests and the ministers of God who wept between the porch and the altar, and cried, "Spare thy people, O Lord, and give not thine heritage to reproach." Such should be our emotions and feelings, in view of the present state of religion among us. And the reason why we do not experience these emotions and feelings, is, that we are so blinded by sin that we cannot see our danger. And is it not to be feared that some of us are past all feeling, that we have hearts like the nether millstone, that our eyes are closed, that we cannot see, and that God has sent us strong delusions, that we might go on and perish, as a judicial affliction upon us for our sins?

2. Christians should unite in faithful and judicious efforts for the reviving influences of the Holy Spirit. They should come

together, and consider the low state of religion; they should inquire into the causes, and make it a subject of special prayer, that they might be awakened to a just sense of their duties and responsibilities in the matter; they should feel that they are the cause of the spiritual deadness in the Church, of the neglect, and indifference, and contempt, with which religion is treated around them. They should feel that they are to blame in this matter, and that upon them rests the responsibility of continuing in this awful and perilous condition. Such a feeling in the Church usually leads to a blessed result: it brings down the Holy Spirit; and we cannot hope for the descent of the Holy Spirit until the Church begins to *wake up* and feel the weight of her responsibilities and duties. This is the great thing now needed among professing Christians. They must look at the state of religion; they must see how deplorable it is; they must feel to mourn over it; and then they must look into their own hearts, and see how, by their neglect of Christian duties, their worldly conformity, their backslidings and sins, they have contributed to this state, and how very guilty they are in the sight of God. They must confess their sins, and humble themselves before God, and repent in dust and ashes. They must call upon the Lord; pray for the Holy Spirit, and God will yet have mercy on them, and hearken to their cry, and send them relief.

3. Christians, in view of the low state of religion, should commence the work of reformation in their own families. We are too apt to look for great things *abroad*, when we should look for them *at home*. If we wish to have a revival in the Church, we must begin in the family. If there are any obstacles in our families, or in our own hearts, they must first be removed before we can hope to see a work of grace commence in our midst. We must *prepare* our families and our own hearts, and then we shall see it go on: and if every Christian did so, if he opened the way for the Holy Spirit in his family and his heart, how soon we would have a revival of religion. This is what hindered the Holy Spirit from coming in our midst; this prevents revivals of religion. We pray for them in the Church; we look for them abroad; but we do not pray—we do not look for them in our families and in our own hearts; and until we begin here, we cannot hope that God will hear our prayers and prosper our labors.

4. Christians should pray for a revival of religion, as the most necessary and important matter that can possibly engage their attention. They should pray, with one accord, with united hearts; they should assemble themselves together for this purpose; they should lay aside every other business, and attend to this; they should feel that this is the first and most necessary business to be attended to, and that the time spent in this business is most pleasing to God and profitable to their souls. They should realize, without a revival of religion, the times are constantly growing worse—iniquity is abounding—the love of Christians is

waxing colder—sinners are growing bolder in sin—God's wrath is waxing hotter against us, and the danger is constantly increasing that we shall all be consumed by that wrath. Such is our situation, and such the crisis to which we have arrived, that the only thing that can save the Church, and the country, and our families, from impending destruction, is *a revival of religion.* God is our only refuge from the storm that is ready to burst upon us. To Him let us flee. He alone, by His Almighty arm, and the influence of His spirit, can save us. Then let us ask this influence. Let us ask God to pour out His Holy Spirit upon our Churches, and our families, and our hearts. Let us pray that He may revive and refresh us by a shower of His grace. This is what we need, a revival of religion; and we need the *spirit of prayer to obtain it.* We need the spirit of the Patriarch who wrestled with God, and said, "I cannot let thee go, except thou give me a blessing." We need the spirit of the Prophet who intreated for Zion, and said, "For Zion's sake will I not hold my peace, and for Jerusalem's sake will I not rest, until the righteousness thereof go forth as brightness, and the salvation thereof as a lamp that burneth."

God alone can revive us, and He will revive us if we do our duty, and use the means He has appointed for this purpose. Though we have deserved that He should leave us to perish in our sins; though He is a Sovereign, and under no obligations to save us, even if we should use the means, yet He hath promised that He will have mercy upon us if we turn from our sins with penitent and broken hearts. He hath said in His word, "Return unto me, ye backsliding children, and I will heal all your backslidings." What a kind invitation! What a precious promise! O, let us accept this invitation. Let us lay hold of this promise, and let us say, "Behold we come unto Thee, for Thou art the Lord our God."

God can bring deliverance to His people. He can raise His Church out of her low state; He can turn the waste and desolate places into blooming fields; He can bring order out of confusion, light out of darkness, and can even so control and overrule sin and wickedness, when they have arrived at their highest pitch, so as to promote His purposes and glory. All this the Lord can do. But for this, He will be inquired of by the house of Israel to do it for them. This is the condition. If we want the power of God to be manifested in our deliverance and salvation, and the accomplishment of His blessed purposes, we must ask for it. O, then, let us ask for a manifestation of His power and grace in our midst. Let us ask for the Holy Spirit with humble, believing, persevering prayer, and then we may expect a time of refreshing from the presence of the Lord.

SERMON CCCCXXII.

BY G. A. LINTNER, D. D.
OF SCHOHARIE, N. Y.

THE CHRISTIAN'S NEED OF A REVIVAL OF RELIGION.

"Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation, and uphold me with thy free spirit. Then will I teach transgressors thy way, and sinners shall be converted unto thee."—PSALM LI. 12, 13.

THE Psalmist uttered these words under deep conviction of sin. He had grievously backslidden—he had committed a gross act of wickedness, for which he was rebuked by the Prophet, and he felt that he deserved the rebuke. He confessed his sin, and said, "Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight."

David, in his fallen and guilty state, felt that he needed the Holy Spirit. He knew that he had sinned against God, and that for this sin he deserved to be cast out from his presence forever. But still he was anxious to return, and he knew that he could not return without the Holy Spirit. He therefore prayed for the Spirit. He asked God to pour out the Holy Spirit into his heart, that he might be delivered from his sins, and restored to the divine favor. He felt not only for himself, but also for others, and especially for those whom he had misled and injured by his wicked example. He had brought reproach upon religion—he had opened the mouths of gainsayers, and strengthened and encouraged sinners in their wicked ways. And now, he felt a desire, not only, that he himself might be restored, but that he might be made an instrument of reclaiming others, who were perishing in sin. "Restore unto me the joy," &c.

The prayer of the Psalmist shows an awakened conscience, after having fallen into sin, and an earnest desire for the renewing and sanctifying influences of the Holy Spirit to recover from this state. It shows also, how easily Christians may be led away by the deceitfulness of their hearts, and the power of the adversary, and that when they thus stumble and fall, they need the Holy Spirit not only to raise up themselves, but also to do something for others. Christians need a revival of religion in their own hearts, to prepare them to labor for the salvation of perishing sinners. To this subject I shall now invite your attention. I shall endeavor to show,

I. What is meant by a revival of religion in the hearts of Christians—and

II. How such a revival prepares them to labor for the salvation of the impenitent.

I. Christians are very liable to fall into sin—even after they have been enlightened by the grace of God, and tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, they are liable to

fall away. Their hearts are so deceitful, and they are so much under the influence of the world, and its evil temptations, that they are easily led astray, and often, before they are aware of it themselves, they have wandered so far from God, that they have lost their interest in religion, and care but little for their souls. This is a very dangerous state for Christians to be in. In this state they are in danger of perishing, as much as the unconverted and impenitent; and they must be awakened from this state, or they will perish—and they can only be awakened by the Holy Spirit. They need the Holy Spirit to rouse them from their lethargy, and show them their true condition—how guilty and wretched they are, how they are dishonoring God, injuring religion, and destroying their own souls; and there are times when Christians see this. When the Holy Spirit enters their hearts, and convinces them of sin—shows them how they have wandered from God, conformed to the world, and yielded to temptation, and neglected their Christian duties—the duties of prayer and meditation, and self-examination; the duties of reading the Scriptures, and worshiping God in their families, and in their closets: and when Christians see and feel this, their hearts will be broken, they will mourn over their sins, and have a desire to return unto God. They will begin to pray, and say with David, "Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation, and uphold me with thy free spirit;" and when their consciences are thus awakened, they will not only feel for themselves, but they will become deeply interested in the salvation of others. They will be ready to labor, and make sacrifices for the salvation of sinners; they will ask for God's Holy Spirit, that they may teach transgressors his way, and that sinners may be converted to Him; they will become so absorbed in religion, and so entirely taken up with God and his service, that they desire to live only for him—their greatest delight, their daily meat and drink, will be to do His will. Earthly objects pass away from the mind, the soul is longing after communion with God—the heart is filled with the spirit of devotion, and there is an anxious desire to glorify God, and to labor for the salvation of the lost and perishing.

When such a spirit takes possession of the heart, religion is no longer a burthen. It becomes easy for Christians to do their duty. They consider it a privilege to serve God—a privilege to pray. It is easy to converse with a neighbor on the subject of religion, and speak with sinners, and try to persuade them to forsake their sins and turn to God. This is what we call a revival of religion in the hearts of Christians; and when we see such a spirit manifested among Christians, we see the power and influence of true religion exemplified, and sinners will be converted to God. When Christians feel the importance of the work in which they profess to be engaged; when they come up to the standard of the Gospel, and act under a full sense of their religious duties and obligations, it will have an effect. Sinners, with all their errors, and prejudices, and enmity against God in their hearts, will see the light, and feel

the power of such a religion, and they will be constrained, almost irresistibly, to yield themselves up to its influence. They cannot withstand its appeals to their consciences and hearts. They must and will be persuaded to turn from their evil ways, and seek an interest in the Savior—and this leads me to consider—

II. How a revival of religion in the hearts of Christians prepares them to labor effectually for the salvation of the impenitent.

1. When Christians are revived in their hearts by the influences of the Holy Spirit, they *have clearer* views and stronger impressions of divine truth. This is one reason why they are prepared to labor more effectually for the salvation of souls. Truth is always powerful, and wherever it is seen in its true light, and felt in its divine power, it has an awakening influence. It raises the mind, and excites the feelings, and stimulates to action. But the truth is sometimes hidden even from Christians. They do not always see it in the light they ought to see it, nor feel its force as they should feel it. When they become cold, and lukewarm, they have very indistinct, and often very mistaken notions of truth and religion. They have wrong and imperfect views of sin—they do not see their duty clearly; they do not feel the power of religion in their hearts as they ought, and consequently, they grow weary and faint, and cold, and careless. But let the Holy Spirit be poured into their hearts—let the Great Teacher, the Spirit of Truth, enter into their minds, with the light of heaven, the light of revealed truth, and they will see how they have been deceiving themselves with wrong views, and false hopes in religion; how they have erred from the truth, and wandered from God, given themselves up to the evil influences to which they were exposed. They will be convinced of their error, and be willing to confess their sin. They will see their faults, and be ready to acknowledge them. The veil will be taken from their eyes, and they will now have a clear perception of the truth. They will now see that they have offended against God, that they have injured their own souls. They will see their true state and condition as wanderers from God and the fold of Christ, and they will be anxious to return with a broken heart—a heart enlightened by divine truth, and sanctified by the Holy Spirit, and ready to be entirely devoted and consecrated to God.

Such are the views and feelings of professing Christians, when they are awakened from sin, and the Word of God is revived in their hearts. They are brought under the influence ot the spirit of truth, and under this influence, they see not only their own sad condition, but they see the state of others who are living without God and without hope in the world. They have received into their hearts the light of truth, and so strong is this light, and so deep the impression it has produced, that they are willing to labor, and suffer, and render sacrifices for the glory of God, and the salvation of souls. This is an invariable result of a revival of religion in the hearts of Christians; they have a clearer discovery of the

truth—feel its impressions more deeply in their hearts, and are more willing to yield themselves up to its influence.

2. *When Christians are revived in their hearts by the influence of the Holy Spirit, they enter more into the spirit of prayer.*—When Christians become cold and lukewarm, they lose this Spirit. When they feel not much concerned for their own souls, they care but little for the souls of others; consequently, they have no desire to pray; and even if they attempt to pray, they will not have the right spirit. You can always tell from the prayer of a Christian how he feels affected, what the state of his heart is, and how much he is interested in religion and in the service of God. Men will pray just as they feel;—if the fire of love and devotion burns feebly on the altar of their hearts, they will emit but little light and heat to warm and enliven those around them; their prayers will be cold and destitute of spiritual life; but if the heart be touched by the Holy Spirit, it will be filled with the spirit of prayer, the spirit of grace and supplication; there will be deep feeling, and earnest entreaty, and holy importunity; there will be a spirit something like the spirit of the patriarch, when he said, "Except thou bless me, I will not let thee go." There will be a pouring out of the heart, an intense desire for the salvation of souls. There will be no such thing as becoming weary and faint. There will be constant knocking at the door, a faithful claiming of the promises, and a laying hold of the hope that is set before us in the Gospel. And when Christians pray with such a spirit, they will feel to labor also for the salvation of sinners; they will not only ask God to convert sinners, but they will seek also that they may be converted through their instrumentality. After they have prayed for the impenitent, they will go to them, and talk with them, and labor with them, and endeavor to produce an impression which will lead them to Christ, and bring them into the ark of his salvation. A Christian who prays only for the salvation of sinners, without ever conversing with them on the subject of religion, cannot have much of the Spirit's influence. His heart is not right; he has not the spirit of prayer; and he might as well not pray at all, as to pray that the impenitent might be converted to God, while he is unwilling to use any exertion, and become instrumental in their conversion. Wherever the Holy Spirit is poured out, you will find the spirit of prayer, a spirit of love, a spirit that always manifests itself in faithful and persevering labors for the perishing.

3. When Christians are revived in their hearts by the influence or the Holy Ghost, they are induced to make special efforts for the salvation of sinners. Like the Psalmist in the text, they become deeply concerned for the souls of the impenitent that are perishing around them; they are anxious to teach transgressors the way, and use every exertion in their power that sinners may repent of their sins and give their hearts to God. They feel constrained, by the love of Christ and the love of souls, to exhort, and admonish, and rebuke sinners, with all patience, and meekness, and long suffer-

ing, that they may forsake their sins, and become reconciled to God, through Jesus Christ, our Savior. This is the effect of the Spirit's influence in the hearts of Christians. It warms the heart, kindles the fire of love, and there is a burning zeal for the salvation of souls. It makes men active in the service of Christ, willing to undergo any labor, or render any sacrifice that may win souls to Christ. It is this spirit working in the hearts of Christians, that removes mountains. It produces wonderful effects; it sometimes even excites the astonishment of the world; it goes from individuals into families, and spreads from house to house, and from family to family, until it has passed through the whole community, and produced an entire change in the character, habits, feelings, and dispositions of the people. When Christians exercise such an influence, and exhibit such an example, they show the power of true religion; they are then indeed like a city set on a hill; their light shines—it shines with a clear and holy brilliancy, and those that wander in darkness see it. They see the holy walk and conversation of Christians, their devotedness to God, their love and affection for each other, their faithful and disinterested labors for the salvation of sinners; they see their love for souls, their anxiety to save them; and they hear their tender entreaties, the strong and affectionate appeals. Sinners see and hear this, and they begin to feel, their hearts are affected, and they are ready to yield to an influence which they cannot longer resist. They can resist almost every other power which can be brought to bear upon them; but they cannot resist the power of love, the power of sympathy, the power of prayer, and effort to do them good. When sinners are convinced in their hearts that Christians really love them, and are laboring to do them good, they will yield to their entreaties, and repent, and turn to God, and seek the Savior. Thousands have been converted in this way. Multitudes that have been so hardened in sin as almost to be given up for lost, have been reclaimed by the faithful and persevering labors and prayers of Christians. God employs his people as instruments for the conversion of sinners. And when the people of God have been awake, when the Holy Spirit has moved upon their hearts, there has been a stir among sinners; they have felt the power of truth and the influence of the Holy Spirit, and the cry has gone forth, as in the days of the Apostles, "Men and brethren, what shall we do to be saved?"

We learn from this subject—

I. *That we cannot expect to see sinners converted as long as Christians are asleep in their sins.* God, it is true, sometimes converts sinners without the instrumentality of Christians. He brings sinners to repentance, and leads them into the ark of Christ's salvation, when Christians are standing in the way. He sometimes even reverses the order of spiritual influences, by which he usually leads men to repentance. He first converts sinners, and then, through their instrumentality, works on the hearts of professing

Christians, instead of employing Christians as instruments to operate on sinners. Still the church is the great instrument in the hands of God of saving souls. For this purpose, God has furnished his church with the ministry, and the ordinances, and spiritual influences, and great moral power. And these powers and influences must be exercised before we can expect to see sinners converted. Christians must wake out of sleep, they must take hold of the work and be active in the service of Christ, or we need not expect that much impression will be produced on those who are hardening their hearts in sin. If Christians will return from their wanderings, and confess their sins, and humble themselves before God, and pray, and consecrate themselves anew to the work, we shall soon see the effect; the Holy Spirit will come down and bless their efforts, and sinners will be converted.

Then let Christians awake. They are sleeping under an awful responsibility, under a tremendous load of guilt. Sinners are perishing around, and stumbling over them into the bottomless pit. O, then, let the Church rouse from her slumbers; let Christians call upon the Lord, that he may pour out his Holy Spirit into their hearts, that they may see their own state, and feel for those who are perishing in consequence of their indifference, and want of feeling, and neglect of duty. Let every Christian awake; let every parent who has children out of the ark of safety, awake, lest his children die in their sins, and their blood be required at his hands; let every head of a family awake, lest the unconverted members of his own household rise up in the day of judgment and say, "You were a professor of religion; I looked to you for instruction and example; but you neglected your duty, you cared not for my soul, and you suffered me to perish when you might have saved me." Let every Christian who has impenitent friends, awake, and labor with renewed diligence, that the souls of those friends which are so precious, and every moment ready to perish, may not be lost for ever.

2. We see that nothing is so much needed, in the present state of the Church, as the influence of the Holy Spirit. We often speak of the low state of religion, and seem to feel that something is necessary to be done, to rouse Christians from their lethargy, and elevate the standard of religion in the Church. We use means, and resort to many expedients, to interest the minds of the people in religion, and in the worship of God; we build churches, engage ministers, and improve our houses of worship, and in every way seek to accommodate the people, with a view of drawing out large congregations; but all this alone will not do. It will not bring out the people as long as they have no hearts to worship God. We need something more than beautiful churches, and eloquent preachers, to produce a right impression on the minds of the people. We need the Holy Spirit to engage their hearts in the worship of God. We need the influences of the Spirit to wake up the Church, to excite an interest in the minds of the people, bring them

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out to church, assemble them in the prayer meeting, and inspire them with feelings of devotion. The Holy Spirit only can awaken Christians; He only can convert sinners, give power and efficacy to his word, destroy the works of Satan, and build up the kingdom of Christ. And we must ask the Holy Spirit to do these things for us. Christians must pray for the Holy Spirit, that they may be awakened, that they may be convinced of their sins, be induced to humble themselves before God, and repent; for this is what they need,—they need the influence of the Spirit to show them their sins, and reclaim them from their wanderings; pardon their sins, take away their guilt, and restore them to the favor of God and the joys of his salvation.

Let us pray for this influence. Let us pray with a deep sense of our depravity and wickedness with an humble confession of our sins, with an meek and fervent spirit, with hearts full of love and compassion, yearning over sinners who are destroying themselves. Let us pray earnestly and perseveringly; and while we pray, let us look up to God, through faith, for the accomplishment of our desires, and God will hearken to the voice of our supplication. He will pour out His Holy Spirit, restore unto us the joys of His salvation, and we shall "teach transgressors His way, and sinners shall be converted to Him."

SERMON CCCCXXIII.

BY REV. WILLIAM T. SAVAGE,
PASTOR OF THE FIRST CONG. CHURCH, HOULTON, MAINE.

CHRISTIAN TOLERANCE.

"All things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them."—MATT. VII. 12.

THE discipline of life is various, and under the Providence of God adjusted to the state and liabilities of our common nature. We are surrounded by circumstances that constantly act upon us as *tests* and *trials of our characters*, the great object of which is to train and educate the spirit to a higher faith in God, to nobler effort, and to a full and consummate happiness. Yet our tendencies are downward, our views are naturally partial, our wills perverse, and our conduct opposed to the law of right. Conscience, which commands us to resist whatever would debase, and to pursue those things which are above, is easily overborne.

In the liability of man to yield to his downward tendencies, and to extinguish, by sinful indulgence, the inner light of the soul, God has been pleased, in order that man might not wander in eternal darkness, to give an external light—the Holy Bible—by which the inner light is to be rekindled, and man is again to be illumined by the knowledge of the truth. An illustration of these remarks you may find in the text. There is no rule of duty more fully prescribed by reason and conscience than the command, "All things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them." And yet so great is our liability to pervert this law, written on the heart, that God has placed it conspicuously in the statute book of His moral kingdom, adding, as an expression of its deep import and binding authority, "this is the law and the prophets."

The signification of the text is this: In your treatment of others, place yourself in their situation, and as in their circumstances you would wish them to do to you, even so do to them.

If this rule, authoritatively enjoined by the conscience of every one, and announced by the Lord Jesus, held full sway over the hearts and conduct of men, O how changed would be the face of the community! Social trials and sorrows would fly away, like the mist before the morning's sun, and heaven's own loveliness would rest upon the bosom of society.

In bringing to your attention the truth uttered by our Savior in the text, my purpose is not to consider it as furnishing a rule for the general conduct of man, but to make an application of it to

one particular aspect or condition of social life—to consider it as inculcating the duty of *Christian tolerance.* Let us

I. Inquire for the true idea of Christian tolerance, and

II. Consider some reasons for the exercise of this virtue.

In endeavoring, then, to gain a true idea of Christian tolerance, the remark, I apprehend, will be found true, that it consists in *a forbearing and kind treatment of the persons and the motives of those of our fellow-beings with whom we feel obliged to differ.*

If men thought, felt, and acted *alike* on all subjects, the world would indeed be more harmonious than at present; but there would be no room for tolerance, and we are far from thinking that mankind would be improved by such a change. It would take away the wind from the atmosphere, the tide from the ocean, the life and energy from all nature. Human society would be breathless, currentless, and inanimate. The soul would slumber, and a death-like palsy would seize upon the human powers. We have good reason, then, to be content with the present constitution of things, and even to rejoice that each mind is left to think and feel, to decide and act for itself. This imparts animation and a purifying energy to the whole mass of human society. But suppose a community of men, with minds diversely constituted, and of various endowments and degrees of knowledge, each arriving at different conclusions, and each bent upon forcing his views upon the others, what would be the result? The jarring sound of Milton's infernal doors, grating harsh thunder, would present no unapt emblem of the spirit of their abode. Universal discord, strife and warfare, must follow. And how will you send peace into that community? Let all unite upon the things in which they are agreed, and let them tolerate one another for the rest. Each has a perfect right (as between man and man) to his own opinions and his own course of conduct, provided he do not infringe upon the rights of others. Let each treat the others in such a way, as in an exchange of circumstances, he would wish them to treat him. This will bring harmony, and a noble spirit of humanity, and Christian forbearance, into that community, and, at the same time, there will remain the spirit of activity and mutual improvement.

In this case, it will be found that each has tolerated the *persons* of the others. There may have been qualities of repugnance and dislike, but each has treated the others in a *kind* and *forbearing* manner.

The highest point of resemblance in men lies in their common humanity. They are alike an emanation from God. His image is enstamped upon their intellectual and moral nature. They are alike partakers of immortality, and alike they have untold interests at stake, which are to be secured or lost by their conduct in this life. That such points of concord, combining the elements of the exalted and the infinite, should be merged in any little personal pique, or that they should be permitted to lie in the background, and the conduct suffered to be controlled by the antipathies and re-

sentments that disfigure common life, we pronounce to be a high manifestation of the spirit of intolerance. It is neither Christian, humane, nor kind. Tolerance regards with sympathy the *immortal man*, and exercises forbearance and pity for his faults. This spirit, while it ennobles him that possesses it, cannot fail to tranquilize and bless all whom it may reach.

True toleration will be found to include also kind treatment of the *motives* of others. A good motive should be ascribed to the conduct of every individual when possible, and due credit should be given therefor. This treatment, which we rightfully expect from others, we should accord unto them. "Every one shall be held innocent in the eye of the law until he be proved guilty," is a maxim of common justice. And we sometimes hear it announced from the bench, and at the bar, "It were better that ninety-nine guilty persons go unpunished than that one innocent man suffer." These sentiments, under the law of charity, should have a full application to the *motives* of men. No motive should be pronounced unworthy until it be proved to be so. And it were better to allow ninety-nine that are impure or equivocal to escape condemnation, than consign to the post of dishonor one that is worthy and pure. Such are the dictates of justice, Christian charity, and tolerance.

But some one of you, perhaps, is ready to ask, "Are there not some persons so vicious and debased that *nothing* worthy in motive or deed is to be expected of them? And in their case, may we not properly set it down that no good thing can come out of Nazareth?" Whether there are such men, my brother, as those respecting whom you inquire, I do not know. It is to be hoped there are not. The highest motive is supreme love to God. There are those, doubtless, who are not influenced by this motive. Nazareth is reputed to have been a very vile place, yet from it proceeded the Savior of the world. Can you tell me, my brother, whether unto those hearts which you deem so graceless and unpromising, some celestial visitant hath not approached and called forth unwonted desires and aspirations therein? Can you tell me that the act which, *from past analogies*, you judge to be bad, is not the first outward manifestation of a new life within and that its motive is not the inspiration of the spirit of Jesus himself? If you cannot discern the spirit of your brother with the eye of the Omniscient, and answer these questions in the negative, then let charity have its perfect work. Despite of past character, let the motive be unto you a good one, and think more kindly of your brother. Can you not attain unto this? Then you have not attained unto the clear sunshine of Christian tolerance. You have yet to struggle up to this region of true dignity and spiritual repose.

But it is very important here to set up a way-mark, to deter my hearers from wandering on to dangerous ground that lies in this vicinity.

I have said that Christian tolerance consists in a kind and forbearing treatment of *the persons* and *motives* of those with whom we feel obliged to differ. The remark I now make, by way of guarding against error, is, that tolerance does not require the mild and forbearing treatment of *false principles* and *opinions*. These, on the contrary, are, in every proper way, to be resisted. If possible, they are to be driven from the earth and utterly extirpated. They are vipers, of exceedingly sharp and venomous fangs, coiled up in the soul, where they nestle and grow, and when sufficiently large and mature, they dart their poison into the most vital part, and hurry the wretched victim to a dreadful end. Endangered ourselves, by such enemies, we should wish our friends to treat them with no forbearance, for tenderness to them is ruin to us. In like manner, we should treat such foes with no forbearance in others, but should endeavor, with all our power, to destroy them. While we treat with kindest and most humane regard *the man* that espouses error, and accord unto him, as far as possible, *worthy motives*, let us *abhor that error* with the whole force of our moral aversion, and by our allegiance to the truth and our love for him, endeavor to extirpate it from his mind.

Thus, it will be seen, that we do not sympathize with the lax view that makes *sincerity* the test of *religious faith*, and that can tolerate any system of error, provided it be honestly held. To regard truth and error as indifferent in the sight of God, is to fasten a libel upon His character. To hold them as indifferent ourselves, is to put an indignity upon our own souls. We make no pretension to such liberality. On the other hand, we associate with the *truth, apprehended and believed*, all the interests and hopes of ourselves and our fellow-men for time and for eternity.

We can tolerate humanity, under whatever odious or offensive form it may disguise itself. We can be so tolerant as to accord, in ample measure, sincere and upright motives to men, even in the espousal of error. But to disregard the heaven-wide distinction between truth and falsehood, to fill up the eternal chasm between virtue and vice, this we never can, by heaven's help—this we never will do. Let it ever be remembered, that true Christian tolerance, as between man and man, regards *persons* and not *principles*—it regards *motives* and not *opinions*. And in what we bear and what we oppose, in what we would tolerate and what we would extirpate, we are to be directed as well by the Savior's example as by his precept in the text, "Whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them."

Having thus defined and illustrated what I conceive to be the true idea of Christian tolerance, allow me here to propose, brethren, *a test* by which you may try your claim to this virtue. Suppose that in the exercise of your free powers and undoubted rights, you have entered upon a course of conduct which, in your judgment, was right and proper, with good and worthy motives; but it has so happened, in the system of social liabilities under which

we live, that your conduct has been censured, your motives have been impugned, and your character and person unworthily treated. This, every one will see, is a conspicuous exhibition of intolerance. Now the test which I propose to each of you is, *can you tolerate this intolerance?* Can you, in kindness, *bear* with your fellow-man who is injuring you? And while you present the truth to him without reserve, can you treat him as a *man*, and feel that his motives, even while wronging you, may not be unmingled evil? Instead of hating and striving with your persecutor, can you love and pity him? If so, then, beyond all doubt, you are tolerant, and I well know that you have caught that spirit at the foot of His cross, who, when hanging thereon, prayed for His enemies, saying, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." But if you have not attained unto this spirit and power of self-control, let me invite you to seek it at once of Him who is meek and lowly, and who proffers it to your acceptance.

II. We will now consider some reasons why men should exercise the virtue of tolerance. Of those that might be adduced for this purpose, I will suggest but two or three. And—

1. *The soul of every man demands that he be tolerant.* This is necessary to his true welfare. Tolerance cannot be intermitted but to his injury. You are aware of that law of projectile forces, by which, in the firing of a cannon, for instance, the recoil against the back of a gun is equal to the power that propels the ball forward through the air to its destined object. There is just such a law of moral projectiles; and every intolerant act (which is more like a cannon ball than like any other conceivable thing), not only produces evil, by shattering wherever it goes, but inflicts its recoil-blow upon the man from whom it originates. Against this his nature cries out; this he cannot with safety endure.

We have been created in the image of God, endowed with reason and understanding, that we may appreciate the beings and objects around us; gifted with susceptibilities, that our hearts may enkindle with generous emotion for our Creator and our brethren; endued with executive energies, that we may accomplish benevolent results for God's glory and the welfare of our race. And how can we look upon our fellow-men, rich in the possession of a common origin and nature with ourselves, unreasonably and in disparagement of their worth, and not injure our minds? Can we shut up our hearts to them, as the objects of our sympathies, and not harden our sensibilities? Can we withhold the outgoings of our energy from promoting their happiness, and not enfeeble and wither our powers? Believe me, we cannot. The outrage we should thus commit upon the throne of God and upon our brethren, is in no wise greater than the assault we should make upon our own souls.

The intolerant man *must be* an unhappy man; there is an obliquity and dimness in his vision that deceive him. Wherever he

goes he sees deformities; traits that should command his interest, lie hidden; men worthy of his love, become objects of his aversion; his heart becomes cold and gloomy; he is unhappy. Under the laws of our moral being, as established by the Almighty, this is the inevitable result. Have we not all sufficient experience on this point to be able to testify that it is so?

Look now at the tolerant man. He passes among the lights and shadows of life with an eye open to all that is good and lovely around him. Error and vice thrust themselves upon his view; they excite his aversion and regret, and he endeavors to suppress them. He is assaulted, perhaps misrepresented and abused; but, like his Master, he remembers that it is *with men*, and in *behalf of humanity*, that he is acting. He is forbearing, charitable, and kind, and he continues in effort still in behalf of his fellow-men, and in determined opposition to every evil. This course, we affirm, cannot fail to promote the welfare and happiness of his soul. It opens to him every object of generous thought, and sympathy, and high devotion. Above all, it brings him into fellowship with that forbearing, self-sacrificing spirit, manifested in the life and death of Jesus, which is the source of all our happiness. O, how little does the intolerant man understand what he does, when, in the exercise of this narrow spirit, he shuts himself out from the sweet symphonies of the human soul! casts off sympathy with the surpassing glories of nature and redemption, and locks up the divinity within him to his own contracted and confined feelings and views! Must not that divinity require enlargement and liberty? Does not the soul, in its own behalf, demand that its possessor be tolerant?

2. The next reason which I offer for the practice of tolerance, is, that *the souls of our fellow-men demand it of us.* The possession of this virtue is not more necessary to our own welfare, than its exercise is befitting and appropriate to our fellow-men. However we may consider the beings among whom we are placed, they, like ourselves, are of celestial descent. Some of them may be debased, and apparently little worthy of regard; but, without exception, their faculties are noble, and their capabilities are far above their present circumstances. The soul of man, though depraved and feeble, is yet a mysterious, a mighty and noble thing. Among the meanest and most cowardly assemblages of men of which we can form any conception, have been some of the mobs that have disgraced this country. And yet, even such an assemblage may not be utterly dead to every generous sentiment. A fierce mob, a few years ago, destroyed the beautiful mansion of a gentleman residing in one of the chief cities of our country. As the infuriated crowd were breaking up costly sofas and chairs, tables and mirrors, after they had wantonly ruined the many pictures that adorned the mansion, we are told that a full length portrait of Washington was brought out and presented to them. One, who had destroyed many other pictures, was about to put his foot

through that; but the cry, "Save it, save it," arrested the kick. "Save it, save it," arose from the vast mob; and the portrait was passed from hand to hand, over the heads of all, and deposited in a church of God, safe from harm. Now these men could not be utterly lost to the feelings of patriotism, and to the fame of Washington, although they were deeply outraging the fundamental principles of both. A person may even descend to the lowest depths of infamy, and appear to others to be utterly abandoned and lost; yet still be a man, and, under the blessing of God, be reclaimed and saved.

In speaking of the Zenaida dove, M. Audubon, the naturalist, relates that a man, once a pirate, assured him that, while at a certain well, dug in the burning shelly sands of a well known key, the soft and melancholy cry of the doves awoke in his breast feelings which had long slumbered, and melted his heart to repentance. He said that, although associated with a band of the most desperate villains that ever annoyed the navigation of the Florida coast, he never left the place without increased fears of futurity. So deeply was he moved by the notes of any bird, and especially by those of a dove, that through these plaintive notes alone he was induced to forsake his vessel, and abandon his companions and his horrible occupation. After paying a parting visit to these wells, and listening once more to the cooings of the Zenaida dove, he poured out his soul in supplication for mercy, and once more became an honest man. He effected his escape amid difficulties and dangers, and now lives in peace in the midst of his friends.

Shall the soul, thus noble in its degradation, in the apparent obliteration of its humanity, thus susceptible of the highest impulses —shall the *human soul* be treated with intolerance? No, brethren, no! Let the response of every heart be, No! There is an appropriateness in the exercise of tolerance towards our fellow beings, and a wrong in withholding it, of which you will become more fully convinced as you become more deeply acquainted with the human spirit in its necessities, its wonderful capabilities, and its mysterious, though often degraded powers. In its errors and vices, its aberrations and guilt, you will find much, very much, to tolerate; but bear and forbear, with all long-suffering and kindness. Bear and forbear, that you may address it in accents that it can consent to hear. Bear and forbear, that you may prove God's voice and power to awaken and beautify, to purify and save his erring and unhappy, yet not forgotten children of the earth. Such tolerance the souls of your fellow-men imperatively demand of you.

Finally, *God requires men to be tolerant.* Each man, we have seen, rightfully demands and expects this immunity from others. The requirement of God is, "Whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them;" thus adding to the other reasons for tolerance, that of his *authority* as the Supreme Sovereign and Law-giver.

It is God's purpose to reveal unto the rational universe His own perfections, as the highest good and the only satisfying portion of the soul. To accomplish this end, he has placed men under a government of law, and in the prevalence of sin, has provided redemption for them through the death of His Son. And now, with the authority of a Sovereign, as well as the kindness of a Father, he calls upon them to co-operate with him in this great work. As the Infinite Proprietor, he lays *his claim* upon them, to direct their utmost power to secure the desired end. He requires that we possess his own spirit, hating sin with the utmost abhorrence, yet bearing and suffering long with the sinner. He requires that we imitate the atoning Savior, filling up that which is left behind of his afflictions, and attaining unto the fellowship of his endurance and sufferings. He requires that we become identified with his mediatorial plan and efforts, that we co-operate with his Spirit, exhibit his truth, and as far as in us lies, give effect to his recovering instrumentality and grace. How noble the calling! How weighty the responsibility and obligation resting upon those that are called!

Unto the largeness of this work the intolerant man can never attain. To its elevated spirit he can never reach; no, never. He cannot deeply sympathise with God in his purposes and ends; he cannot deeply sympathise with the plan of redemption through a crucified Savior; he cannot sympathise with the deep woes of the human soul; he is shut out from the vital, animating spirit of God's reign over this fallen world. Brethren, if we would accomplish the high end of our being, and display the glories of the ever blessed God, we must obey his voice, put away this alien spirit, and exhibit the spirit of Christian forbearance and love.

Such are some of the reasons for the exercise of this kindly virtue. From the inmost recesses of our hearts, from the souls of our fellow men, and from the infinite mind of God, voices issue forth, calling unto us, and urging upon us, to secure and constantly exercise the feelings of Christian forbearance and kindness. Deep calleth unto deep. All invite us into sweet accord and harmony with the spirit of God, the spirit of man, and the spirit of holy effort under the mediatorial King. Shall we listen to any other voice? Shall any other spirit have dominion over us?

My brethren, there is a great warfare going on in the world. This conflict must continue and extend. "Overturn and overturn," is the oracle that strikes upon our ear from the rapt strains of prophetic vision. Truth must overthrow error; virtue must supplant vice. In this great warfare, *you* are enlisted as combatants. Let it be ever remembered that you carry on not a *personal* conflict, but a conflict of *principle;* therefore, ever and fully tolerate the persons of your fellow-men; think favorably of their motives, even to your heart's utmost wish. But false principle and vice, by your allegiance to the truth, resist unto the death. Invite their extirpation in yourselves—show them no quarter in others.

Divide notyour influence in this great conflict. Let your whole moral power, without subtraction and without intermission, be directed against error and sin. To this end, while zealous for the truth, be true to yourselves and to your God; in kindness and love *tolerate* your fellow-men. What things soever ye would that they should do to you, do ye even so to them.

LOOKING UP THERE, AND DOWN HERE.

THE celebrated Matthew Wilkes was once in company with a young clergyman, who was appointed to preach in the chapel formerly occupied by Whitefield. Having to look into the Bible in the pulpit for some purpose connected with the services, before the congregation were assembled, Mr. Wilkes discovered the young minister's notes between the leaves. "What! (said he) notes, where Whitefield preached? What! are you going to *read* a sermon from Whitefield's pulpit?" "Ah! (said the minister) the place is large, and is a new one for me, and I tremble at the thought of coming to the people without some written preparation." "Ah, well, well," said Mr. Wilkes, "it may be so; but remember, (and here he looked up to heaven, at the same time laying his hand upon the manuscript sermon on the desk) remember, the more you look up there, the less you'll find it necessary to look down here."

This was very striking. There is a great deal of heavenly meaning contained in this sentence of Mr. Wilkes. There is a great deal of instruction for every minister. "*The more you look up there, the less you will have to look down here.*" The more you look to God, the less will be your dependence on yourself, and on man. The more you look to God, the more independent you will be of yourself and of man. The more superior you will be to the *fear* of man, which bringeth a snare, and the more powerful you will be in yourself, by the grace of God within you. Look aloft! It is the only way to get safely down. Look aloft! Whether you have notes before you, or thoughts within you, or both, it is the only way to make them available, the only way to give them power over your hearers, the only way to speak them as from God, the only way to preach with comfort and happiness to yourself, with power and benefit to your hearers. Look up to God! It is the only way to make your hearers look thither also. If *you* see nothing but your manuscript, your *hearers* will not see much in that. And if you have not gotten your manuscript from *God*, your hearers will get little of God's thoughts from *you*. Your notes may have come from God's word, but if you yourself so not look up to God, the *power* of God's word will not be in them. A man needs as much help from God to preach a written dermon, as he does an extempore one; nay, perhaps more; for a

fluent extempore speaker may preach a torrent of mere words with some warmth to the hearer, if there be a fervent manner, when, if the torrent had been confined to a manuscript, it would have proved a very cold shower, or a mere damp drizzle. There is, indeed, too much of this drizzle in preaching.

Good thoughts in *notes* are apt to have more value, but they do not make so much *noise*, as light thoughts in *specie*. Your hearers themselves must be in the habit of going to the bank to prove your notes, and then they will find out their value. If you got them at the bank of heaven, your hearers will find that they are of more value than extempore silver. If you only made them yourself, they will be worth nothing at all. A handful of extempore sixpences, procured at the mint, will be better than hundreds of pounds signed only by yourself on paper. But if you did get your notes at the bank, your hearers will know it, even while you are issuing them; there being always an indefinable demonstration in the air and manner of the man who, as Matthew Wilkes says, "*looks up there*," that makes his hearers feel and say involuntarily, He got that note at the bank; it has the stamp of heaven's chancery. But heavy notes need more feeling in their issue, in their delivery, than light extempore sixpences. You may make much jingle with the latter, and this will pass with many for fervor, but with the former, unless you have the fervor which is obtained only by "*looking up there*," you will make but little impression on others, and even the notes which you get from the word of God will make but little impression on yourself.

The Word of God needs the Spirit of God, and while the word of God may be studied *in the letter*, and preached *in the letter*, merely by "*looking down here*," the Spirit of God can be obtained only by "*looking up there*." It is only the preacher, who *looks up there*, that knows how to *look down here* aright. The same may be said of all Christians, of hearers as well as preachers. Matthew Wilkes' word is as good for one as the other. The more you look to God, the less you will find it necessary to look to man. The more you look to God, the better you will know how to look to his word, and the more you will see of him in it. And as to notes in the pulpit, the more you are in the habit of looking up to God before you go to church, the more you will see of God in the preacher, and the more you will receive *from* God *through* him, if indeed he himself is more in the habit of looking *up there*, than *down here*. And if not, you will know it. But whether the preacher looks up to God or not, it is none the less your duty to do so. And it ought to be remembered that the more you look up there, the more he will look up there also. The way a church looks has a great influence on the way a minister looks. Wherefore, let all look up to God.—*Dr. Cheever.*

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SERMON CCCCXXIV.

BY THE REV. ALBERT BARNES,

OF PHILADELPHIA.

Delivered in the Broadway Tabernacle, New York, Sabbath Evening, May 17, 1846; and in the Tremont Temple, Boston, Sabbath Evening, May 24th, 1846, before the American and Foreign Sabbath Union.

THE VALUE OF THE SABBATH TO YOUNG MEN.

"The Sabbath was made for man."—Mark ii. 27.

That is, it was made for man *as such*—whatever his age, rank country, complexion. It was made for the old man, that, at the close of a life of care and toil, he may review the journey over which he has traveled; that he may recal his errors and sins, and seek forgiveness, preparatory to his departure to another world; and that by calm contemplation and prayer, on a day designed to be so much an image of heaven, he may be fitted to enter into the world of which it is the emblem. It was made for the man in middle life—burdened and harassed with cares; endeavoring to support his family, and to make provision for himself and them when he is old; sustaining the various offices of the state, or laboriously occupying the departments of instruction; engaged in incessant professional duties, or exhausting his physical powers in the workshop or on the farm, that he may unburden himself for a time of his weary load; that he may counteract the tide of worldly influences that set in upon his soul, and put back the intrusions of selfishness, of avarice, of ambition; that he may cultivate the warm affections of the heart, and that by temporary rest he may gather strength to meet anew the temptations, and bear the toils of life. It was made for the young man, as he enters on his untried journey, that he may prepare himself for the career which he proposes to pursue. It is to this latter aspect of the design for which the Sabbath was 'made,' that I have been requested to ask your attention, by showing the importance of the Christian Sabbath to young men.

It was of Telemachus, then a young man, that Pisistratus, when approaching him as a stranger, said, in a passage which Melancthon declared to be the most beautiful in Homer, "All men stand in need of the gods." *Odys.* iii. 48. Every young man, in a much

higher sense than is supposed by most when they enter on life, will have need of the aid of his Maker; will be in circumstances where his own wisdom will not avail him, where his own strength will be weakness, where his skilful counsellors and advisers seem all to have departed, and where he will feel that none but God can furnish him with the protection and guidance which he needs. The Sabbath refers to our relations to God; but it is an appointment which was not revealed to the mind of the heathen sage as adapted to secure for a young man the needed aid from on high.

There is no more interesting object of contemplation than a young man when he is about entering on life. Those of us who have passed through that season, have a melancholy pleasure in looking back to it in our own lives, and in comparing our hopes and prospects as we looked out on the world, with what we have found to be the reality; and we cannot but feel that we have a sort of right to come and tell those who are just beginning the world how we felt; what plans we formed; what mistakes we made; how these mistakes might have been avoided, and what we have found the world to be. A young man, just entering on life, embarks on an unknown and a perilous voyage. If the interest of the fact itself will not suffer by the comparison, his condition may be likened to that of a ship that has never yet tried the waves and storms, as it first leaves the port. This world, so full of beautiful things, furnishes few objects so lovely as such a vessel, when with her sails all spread, and with a propitious breeze, she sails out of the harbor. But who can tell what that vessel is to encounter—into what unknown seas she may yet be drifted; between what masses of ice she may be crushed; on what hidden rocks she may impinge; what storms may whistle through her shrouds, and carry away her tall masts, or on what coasts her broken timbers may be strewed? Now, as the waves gently tap her sides, nothing can be more beautiful, or more safe; but storms arise on that ocean which now looks so calm, and in those storms, her beautifully modelled form; her timbers framed together to defy the tempest; her ropes and her canvass will avail nothing; and if she is saved, none but He can do it who "rides on the whirlwind and directs the storm."

A young man enters on the perilous voyage of life. We come to recommend the Sabbath to him as adapted to be a means of security in that dangerous way. When it is asked, as it naturally will be, what *benefit* he may derive from it, the thoughts are turned to these inquiries:—What the Sabbath is: What there is in the condition and prospects of a young man to which such an institution may be adapted: and, How its observance will contribute to the promotion of these objects.

The Sabbath presents itself to a young man, as it does to all others, in two aspects:—as a day of rest from worldly toil and care,

and a day of leisure to be employed in higher and nobler pursuits.

Its primary aspect is that of a day of rest from worldly toil. It meets man as a season in which the cares of life are to be suspended. The plow is to be left standing in the furrow; the store is to be closed; the sound of the hammer and of the mill is to be hushed; the loom is to stand still; the voice of worldly amusements is to die away; the marts of commerce, thronged on other days, are to be vacated; the judge is to descend from the bench; the noise of debate in the halls of legislation is to cease; the lawyer is to lay aside his brief; the wayfaring man is to pause in his journey; and the streets of the usually crowded capital, and of the busy village, are to unite in solemn stillness with the remote hamlet, and with the lonely cottage standing far from the busy haunts of men, in a suspension from the toils and agitations which pertain to this world. The elementary notion is that of *rest* from worldly toils and cares:—rest for the body; rest for the wearied mind. If the body has been worn down with fatigue through other days by traveling, or by hard labor at the plough or the forge; if the intellect has been exhausted by distracting mercantile pursuits, or by conflicts at the bar, or by stern application in the pursuits of science; if the passions have been lashed into excitement amidst the storms of political strife; if the affections of the heart have been jarred and dislocated in the jostlings and conflicts of the world; if the memory has been taxed by severe mental effort, or the imagination in an

> adventurous song,
> That with no middle flight presumes to soar
> Above the Aonian mount, while it pursues
> Things unattempted yet in prose or rhyme,

the Sabbath is designed to furnish for each and all these, a season for repose. It is presumed that it is equally needful for a Cincinnatus at his plow, and Washington at Mount Vernon; for Milton, taxing the powers of the mind to the utmost in producing that "which may live to after times, and which the world will not willingly let die;" for Locke, in investigating with profound application the laws of the mind; for Newton, in determining the laws by which the worlds are moved; for Howard, in the continued intensity of zeal on an elevation which would have been passion in other men; for Pym and Hampden, in the stormy scenes of debate, when toiling to lay the foundations and to determine the conditions of civil liberty. Wherever mind and body are taxed and exhausted by toil,—and it is meant in the laws of our being that they shall everywhere be employed,—there the Sabbath is designed to come as a day of rest. The ship indeed will glide along at sea, for its course cannot be arrested, and the Sabbath of the mariner may often be different from that of the dweller in a palace or a cottage, and different from that which the seaman feels that he needs. The

sun and the stars will hold on their way, and the grass will grow, and the flower open its petals to the light, and the streams will roll to the ocean, for there is need that the laws of nature should be uniform; and the fibres of plants, and suns, and planets, and streams experience no exhaustion, and He who directs them all "fainteth not nor is weary;" but man *is* weary, and needs rest.

The other aspect in which the Sabbath meets man is, that of a day be devoted to other than worldly pursuits. He who made us would have as little consulted the laws of our being by appointing a day for mere indolence and inaction, as he would had he designated no day of rest. We have other interests than those which are connected with mere *labor*, whether of body or mind. We sustain other relations than those which pertain to "business," to gold, to honor, to pleasure. We have not only a body, but a soul; not only an intellect, but a heart; not only an imagination, but a conscience. We are not merely working animals, but are intelligent and accountable moral agents; we live not only here, but we are to live hereafter; we are not only plowmen, machinists, merchants, lawyers, physicians, ministers of religion, professors and teachers, but we are sons, brothers, husbands, fathers; we are not only men with understandings, but men with sympathies and affections, in a world too where there is the amplest room for the play of all our faculties. Our Maker has formed no susceptibility of the soul which he has not designed should be developed, and for whose development, in just proportions, he has not made ample arrangements. The bodily powers, the muscles, the organs of sense, the whole frame, the intellect, the memory, the imagination, the social affections, the sympathetic powers, he designs should be fully developed. He would not have the one stinted that the other may expand to a monstrous growth; he would not have us mere intellectual beings, cultivating the mind for purposes of cunning and self-glory, like Iago; or mere working animals; or cold, calculating lovers of gold, like Shylock; or mere creatures of the imagination, formed under the sole influence of poetry and novels; or mere weepers; or living only to enjoy mirth and to laugh at the follies of mankind, as is fabled of Democritus. There is not a faculty of our nature pertaining to body or mind; demonstrative or imaginative; individual or social; binding us to home and kindred, or to the world at large; uniting us to this world or to the next—or to distant worlds;—nay, exciting an interest in our minds in the flower, the running stream, or the meanest creature that creeps or flies, which it is not designed that we should cultivate if we would secure the perfection of our being Man, with these relations, and these high powers to cultivate, the Sabbath meets as a day of leisure, that he may show, on such a day of rest, that he is distinguished from beasts of burden, and creatures governed by instinct, and those incapable of moral feeling, and those destined to no higher being, and those not knowing how to aspire to fellowship with God. The bird, indeed, will build

its nest on the Sabbath, and the beaver its dam, and the bee its cell; and the lion will hunt its prey, for they have no higher nature than is indicated by these things. But man has a higher nature than the fowls of the air, and the beasts of the forest; and the world would have been sadly disjointed and incomplete, if there had been no arrangements to develop it. The Sabbath is among those arrangements.

It is, indeed, a simple thing, merely to command a man to *rest* one day in seven; but most of the great results which we see, depend on very simple arrangements. The law which controls the falling pebble is a simple law—but all these worlds are kept by it in their places; the laws which you see developed in a prism bending the different rays in a beam of light, are simple laws—but all the beauty of the green lawn, of variegated flowers, of the clouds at evening, of the lips, the cheek, the eye; and all that we admire on the canvass when the pencil of Rubens or Raphael touches it, is to be traced to those simple laws. It is one of the ways in which nature works to bring out most wonderful results from the operation of the simplest laws.

We are prepared now to inquire what there is in the condition and prospects of a young man peculiarly to which such an institution may be adapted. The question is, whether there is any thing in the Sabbath of which one who is in the circumstances of a young man may avail himself, to check any tendency to evil, or to strengthen any of the principles of which it will be desirable to avail himself in the prosecution of his purposes of life.

A young man, like all other men indeed, may be contemplated in two aspects—as an individual, and as sustaining important relations. Though he has this in common, however, with all other men, yet there is a degree of importance to be attached to him in his relations to others which exist nowhere else—for soon all that is valuable in society is to pass into his hands. An aged man may, as an individual, be eminently good or evil, but his character is constantly losing its importance in reference to the world. So far as the *relations* of life are concerned, he is constantly either voluntarily or involuntarily *detaching* himself from all around him, and becoming an isolated being. He retires from the bar, the pulpit, the senate chamber, the exchange. He withdraws from business, and makes preparation to pass his houses and his lands into the hands of others. He has no powers now to be cultivated in which the world feels any interest; he has no passions to be restrained, from whose development the world would have anything to dread; he can form no plan stretching into future years, on which the world would look with either hope or fear. He will indeed be respected if he is virtuous, but he will not be feared if he is wicked; and whether the one or the other, the weapon which he strikes in favor of virtue or vice, will be like that in the hand of the aged Priam—

telum imbelle sine ictu.

We may love him as a father, venerate him as a sage, honor him for his past services, or pity him on account of his infirmities; but we cease to rely on his arm in the defence of his country, or his eloquent voice in favor of a righteous cause; and we cease to dread him as a foe.

Not so, however with a young man. Everything is passing into his hands. The key of every warehouse, of every bank, and of every insurance office; every pulpit, every bench of justice, and every professor's chair; every deed, and every bond and mortgage; all the endowments of colleges and asylums; our libraries, our dwellings, our farms, our gardens; all the offices of the township and of the nation; all the enterprizes of national improvement, and all the plans of benevolence—fruits of many prayers and of thoughtful wisdom—all these things are soon to be committed to young men. In every pulsation of the heart of a young man, therefore; in every plan that he forms; in the development of every feeling and purpose, the community has the deepest interest. And when the eye is dim with age, and the frame is weak and palsied, if there is anything that will kindle up that eye with momentary brilliancy, or inspirit that frame, it is the expanding virtue of a son, and the feeling that the coming generation will not be unworthy to receive a trust so dear to a departing Christian and patriot. So the aged patriarch Jacob, when he was borne down under a weight of years, and he felt that he was about to die, assembled his sons around him; and, animated by the prospects before them, his departing soul was stirred within him. He pronounced his last benediction in language of the loftiest prophetic inspiration; committed to them the great interests of truth and of religion, and having made an end of commanding his sons, he "gathered up his feet into the bed, and yielded up the ghost, and was gathered peacefully unto his people."—Gen. xlix.

Let us then ask, more distinctly, what there is in a young man, considered as an individual, and in reference to these relations, which furnishes ground for this solicitude, and on which an institution like the Sabbath may be supposed to have a happy influence.

In the bearing of the Sabbath on the character and prospects of a young man, we may contemplate him in three aspects—as demanding periodical rest; as exposed to influences which it would be desirable to check and control by some such institution; and as designed to be a religious being.

(1.) First, as demanding periodical seasons of *rest*. I mean, that he comes under the general law of our being, though in the full vigor of his youthful powers, by which *rest* at certain seasons is demanded. The law of nature on this subject is not one which is applicable only to enfeebled age, but which has respect to man in his highest vigor of body and of mind.

I lay down, then, the general principle, that such are the laws *of our nature* in respect to all the efforts which we can put forth,

that *rest*, honest rest, is demanded after exertion; that a continued and unremitted employment of our powers is, in many cases, impossible, and in all, injurious; and that by allowing the periodical rest which nature demands, man will accomplish more than he will by continuous and unintermitted effort.

This is true, as we all know, of the muscular system, voluntary and involuntary. In breathing, in winking the eyes, in the beating of the heart, there is a system of alternate action and repose, each brief, indeed, in their existence, but indispensable to the healthful action of the muscle, and to the continuance of life. Each one of these organs, too, though they seem to be constantly in motion, will have the *rest* which nature demands, or disease and death will be the result. The same is true of our voluntary muscles. He that should endeavor to labor at the same thing constantly; he that should attempt to run or walk without relaxation; he that should exercise the same class of muscles in writing, in the practice of music, in climbing, or in holding the limb in a fixed position, would soon be sensible that he was violating a law of nature, and would be compelled, by a fearful penalty, to pay the forfeit. Nay, in doing these very things—in running, or leaping, or climbing, or in the most rapid execution of a piece of music, nature has provided, by antagonist muscles, that the great law demanding repose shall not be disregarded. A long-continued and unintermitted tension of any one of the muscles of the frame, would soon bring us in conflict with one of the universal laws of our being; and we should be reminded of the existence of those laws in such a way, that we should feel that they *must* be observed.

Yet the operation of *this* law of our nature is not enough. We need other modes of rest than those which can be obtained by the intermitted action of a muscle, which is soon to be resumed. We need longer repose; we need an entire relaxation of the system; we need such a condition that every muscle and nerve shall be laid down—shall be relaxed—shall be composed to rest, and shall be left in an undisturbed position for hours together, where there shall be no danger of its being summoned into action. Nature has provided for this too; and this law must be obeyed. For a few hours only can we be employed on our farms or in our merchandise, and then the sun refuses us light any longer, and night spreads her sable curtains over all things, and the affairs of a busy world come to a pause. Darkness broods on the path of man; comes into his counting-house and his dwelling; meets him in his travels; interrupts his busiest employments; wraps the world in silence, and he himself sympathises with the universal stillness of nature, and sinks down into a state of unconsciousness. The heart continues, indeed, still to beat, but more gently than under the excitements of political strife, of avarice, and revenge; the lungs heave, though more gently than in the hurry and excitement of the chase, or in the anxious effort for gold. But the eye-lid, heavy, will not suffer the eye to look out on the world, and even

its involuntary action entirely ceases, and it sinks to repose. The ear, as if tired of hearing so many jarring and discordant sounds, hears nothing; the eye, as if wearied with seeing, sees nothing; the agitated bosom is as calm as it was in the slumberings of infancy; the stretched and weary muscle is relaxed; the nerve is released from its office of conveying the intimations of the will to the distant members of the exhausted frame. The storm may howl without, or the ocean roll high its billows, or perhaps even the thunder of battle may be near, but nature will have repose. Napoleon, at Leipsic, exhausted by fatigue, reposed at the foot of a tree, even when the destiny of his empire depended on the issue of the battle; and not even the roaring storm at sea can prevent compliance with this necessary law. Sleep,

> "Upon the high and giddy mast,
> Seals up the ship-boy's eyes, and rocks his brains
> In cradle of the rude imperious surge;
> And in the visitation of the winds,
> Who take the ruffian billows by the top,
> Curling their monstrous heads, and hanging them
> With deaf'ning clamors in the slippery clouds,
> That with the hurly, death itself awakes."

To the weary man,

> "Tired nature's sweet restorer, balmy sleep,
> —his ready visit pays.
> Night, sable goddess, from her ebon throne,
> In rayless majesty, now stretches forth
> Her leaden sceptre o'er a slumbering world.
> Silence, how dread! and darkness, how profound!
> Nor eye, nor listening ear, an object finds:
> Creation sleeps. 'Tis as the general pulse
> Of life stood still, and nature made a pause,
> An awful pause, prophetic of her end."

This law of rest must be obeyed. There is no muscular frame so powerful that it can be disregarded; there is no pursuit so attractive that it can long cease to act; there is no joy so intense that sleep can be always driven away, that we may taste the bliss uninterrupted; and there is no sorrow so keen, however long it may drive sleep from the eyes, that will not ultimately yield to it —*either* the calm sleep of night, or the calmer slumbers of the grave. The mighty mind, and the vigorous frame of Napoleon once enabled him to pass four days and nights in the exciting scenes of an active campaign, without sleep, and then he fell asleep on his horse. The keenest torture which man has ever invented has been a devise to drive sleep from the eyes, and to fix the body in such a position that it cannot find repose—and even this must fail, for the sufferer *will* find repose on the rack or in death.

The same law demanding rest exists also in relation to the mind, and is as imperious in regard to the intellectual and moral powers, in order to their permanent and healthful action, as to the muscles

of the body. No man can long pursue an intellectual effort without repose. He who attempts to hold his mind long to one train of close thinking; he who pursues far an abstruse proposition; and he who is wrought up into a high state of excitement, *must* have relaxation and repose. If he does not yield to this law, his mind is unstrung; the mental faculties are thrown from their balance; and the frenzied powers, perhaps yet mighty, move with tremendous but irregular force, like an engine without balance-wheel or 'governor,' and the man of high intellectual powers, like Lear, becomes a raving maniac. So with our moral feelings. The intensest zeal will not always be on fire; the keenest sorrow will find intermission; and even love does not always glow with the same ardor in the soul. This law, contemplating our welfare, cannot be violated without incurring a fearful penalty. If men will apply the powers of the body or the mind without relaxation; if they will deny themselves necessary rest, there is no recuperative or compensative power which nature has provided to remedy the evil. There is no constitution, however Herculean, that can bear up under the forced and unnatural effort. The most vigorous frame must yield; the most gigantic powers will find rest in the grave. I need not remind you how often this principle is illustrated in our colleges, and in each of the learned professions. How many a youth is cut down by disregarding the law that the body and mind *must* have rest, and by pushing his studies far into that time which nature has allotted to repose! How many a youth finds an early grave by seeking that which no man should ever seek—the reputation of 'trimming the midnight lamp!' When will the world cease to mourn over the early fall of Henry Kirke White, a name redeemed from the imputation of folly only by the splendor of his genius, and the purity of his heart, and by that sweet piety which breathed in all that he ever wrote—the pure sparkling beauty of those gems for which he laid down his life? The name of the youthful Mason in our own land will be remembered as much with sorrow that he wore out his years by intense application to one pursuit, regardless of health and life, as for the splendor of that talent which promised to place him at the head of the noblest of the sciences, in this Western world. The law which imposes on the generous and ardent nature of youth the necessity of rest from toil; which would have taught Kirke White and Mason to pause and rest—honestly, *rest*, is a benevolent law. It can never be violated without more ultimate harm than good. Whether this law which nature has ordained is sufficient for man without other seasons of rest of positive appointment, will be appropriately considered in another part of this discourse.

(2.) We have contemplated the young man in his relation to the law of nature which demands periodical seasons of rest. Let us next consider him as exposed to influences which it would be desirable to check and control by some such institution as a Sabbath

—a day frequently returning that should break in upon such influences, and bring in those of another kind.

The influences to which I refer are those which spring from a uniform pursuit of any kind, and those which tend to sap the foundation of virtue.

(*a*) The mind is not in a condition for its best development, when it is under an *unbroken influence* of any kind, however good in itself. It is not made for one thing, but for many things; not for the contemplation of one object, but of many objects. Life is not all one thing, it is broken up into many interests, many hopes, many anxieties, many modifications of sorrow and joy. On the earth it is not all night or all day; all sunshine or all shade; all hill or all vale; all spring or all winter. No man is made exclusively for any one pursuit, or for the exercise of one class of affections or feelings only, or to touch on society like a globe on a plain, only on one point. If there *were* such a being in the shape of a man—one who had a mind that *could* be applied only to one class of things, or affections that *could* love only one class of objects, he would be a monster;—and towards this condition every man approximates who gives his whole soul, with all its varied powers, to the unbroken pursuit of a single thing. Let him do nothing but read poetry; let him do nothing but tell his beads or repeat his "paternoster;" let him do nothing but study mathematics or metaphysics; or let him do nothing but make money, and valuable as any of those things may be in themselves, he never meets the full demands of his nature. There are powers of his soul which are like those parts of the frames of animals which you see where nature began to work as if they might be of use, but which never being employed, became utterly dried up and useless.

Now look one moment, for illustration, at the effect of *unbroken and uninterrupted worldliness* on a man's mind. The man referred to may develope in the highest degree the powers of mind which constitute the successful merchant; he may have a far-reaching sagacity in business; he may never send out a vessel on an unsuccessful adventure; he may possess the powers of calculation in the highest degree; he may become rich, and build him a palace, and be "clothed in fine linen and purple," but what is he then? Is he a *man* in the proper sense of the word *man?* There is but one single class of his faculties which has ever been developed, and he is *not* a man. He is but a calculating machine, though the powers of his nature may have been carried as far as possible in that direction. But what is he as a social being? Beyond the circle of the most limited range of topics he has no thoughts; no words. What is he as an intellectual being? Except in one limited department of the intellectual economy, his mind has never been cultivated at all. What is he as a man of sensibility, of refinement, of cultivated taste? Not one of these things has been cultivated, and in none of them, unless by accident, has he any of the qualities of a man. What is he in relation to the sympathies

of a tender heart toward the poor, the needy, the oppressed? If those things are found in his books of account, they come within the range of his vision, but not otherwise. What is he in relation to the salvation of his own soul? Just as if he had none. What is he in relation to the world of sorrow and of sadness, and to the efforts which are made to alleviate its woes, and to raise it in the scale of being? He is acquainted with the world for commercial purposes only; he knows its geography, its ports of entry, its consuls, its custom-house laws; but he knows not the world as an abode of suffering and of wrong, and, I may add, as dressed up in exquisite beauty by its Maker. Man, in the costume of China or India, he knows as a trafficker; man, as made in the image of God and as a moral being, he knows not in any costume or land. This *unbroken influence* on the mind, the Sabbath is adapted, without periling anything good, to break up. We shall see that it would not be safe to do it without something to give occupancy to the interval, and that the kind of occupancy which the Sabbath would furnish is that which would prevent any evil, and which would introduce valuable influences of a much higher order.

(*b*) The other kind of influences on the mind of a young man which I said it is desirable to check, are those which tend to sap the foundations of virtue. I need not say, that every young man is exposed to temptation. That is so obvious, that it would not be profitable to dwell on it. I may remark, however, that in connection with the subject of temptation, every young man is on *trial* with reference to the question what the community will entrust to him in future life. The world is favorably disposed towards young men. We, who have reached middle or advanced life, know full well—gray hairs and infirmities will keep us in mind of it if it is too painful to dwell upon it voluntarily—that all that *we* have, and all that we hold dear in church or state is soon to pass into other hands. Some youths in the crowd are even now coming forward slowly but steadily, to elbow us out of the pulpit; out of our place at the bar; out of the circle of our practice in medicine; out of the exchange; out of the world. They are to own what we own now, and to carry forward or defeat our plans of public improvement and of benevolence. We are making up our minds to bear this crowding, and to make our exit from the stage, with as good a grace as possible; but we cannot say that we have no solicitude about the *character* of those into whose hands all these things are soon to pass. Hence, every young man is on trial —alike before his co-equals and his sires. There is an eye of unslumbering vigilance on every young man—more vigilant and more unslumbering than most young men suppose; and the whole question, what portion of this rich general inheritance is to be entrusted to the hands of any one young man is to be determined solely by the *character* which he shall form. Into that character on which all depends, enter his views and principles; his habits of truth, and industry, and honesty; the manner in which he resists temptation,

or yields to it; the triumphs which he achieves over powerful allurements to evil, or the ease with which he surrenders himself to the soft pleasures of indolence and sensuality. The character of every young man is known by the community where he lives, and he never yields to temptation without doing much to determine what he is to be in future life. The true question is, whether he is worthy of the *confidence* of the community; worthy to be entrusted with business, with office, with clients, with patients; and it is not improper to add, with the hand of a virtuous woman for a wife.

Let it also be added, that this trial extends through all the period of youth, and reaches wholly up to manhood. It is not sufficient to have escaped from one danger; to have emerged triumphantly from one form of temptation. The young man must have escaped *every* danger; must have gone safely through all forms of temptation. There is often a point in a young man's life when he *seems* to have escaped danger, but which is in fact the prelude to his ruin. He has passed through one form of peril, and seems to be safe, and yet from that very point he will move only to destruction. The mind may linger a little while, and then, when apparently safe, a new danger will arise, and though the struggle may be arduous and torturing, it will be too late for rescue. On the great river that flows west of the Rocky mountains to the ocean, there is a place where the waters are compressed by the rocks into a narrow channel, and where the river suddenly falls many feet, pitching and tumbling over the rocks. The passage is by no means unattended with danger, but it is not unfrequently made in a boat. Yet *below* that fall, there is a deeper danger still. The water appears smooth, gliding onwards as though there were no treachery in its flow. The boat, having shot down the narrow passage, is seen to stop, and to lie without motion on the bosom of the waters. It neither goes forward, nor backward, nor towards either shore, as if there were a moment of deliberation in which way it should go. Soon it begins to move, not forward, but in a circular direction. It moves so gently that one who knew not the perils of the place would feel no alarm; but then commences the fearful struggle. Round it is swept with increasing velocity in spite of the efforts of the boatman. Every oar is plied; every nerve of the oarsman is stretched; every effort possible made at the bow and the stern to turn the boat from that fatal current. It goes round, and round, and round, in spite of death-like exertions, increasing in rapidity as the circles grow smaller, until, having reached the centre, in an instant, the boat and all its crew disappear. Rare is it that a fragment of the boat is seen afterwards, or that a body that is lost is recovered.* So there are points in the lives of young men, when they seem to have escaped the greatest perils, and when there seems to be no dangerous tendency in any direction. Yet soon there is a movement, perhaps commencing far from the vortex; and there is a struggle, but the current sweeps in

* U. S. Exploring Expedition, iv. 403.

to ruin. The young men who are lost by intemperance and sensuality, do not perish without a struggle. They do not lay their oars calmly down, and let the current sweep them on. It is after many a struggle—when too late; it is after many a conflict, when the power that bears them forward has secured a firm grasp, that they perish. Now, what the young man needs for his safety, is some steady influence in favor of virtue that shall bear him through every danger; some power acting on his soul at every point—when he *seems* to be safe, and when he is *seen* to be in danger; when he has escaped one manifest place of peril, and when he glides into a more dangerous position, though it *seems* to be safe; some steady influence that shall accompany him up to manhood, and place him in safety on that elevation beyond all the dangers that beset youth. The question now before us is, whether the Sabbath, properly observed, would exert such an influence on the mind of a young man? Or, perhaps the true question in regard to the young men of this land, in fact, would be, since this day *will* be a day of suspended toil, whether if improperly observed, it will not do more than all other things else to sweep him on to destruction, even when he feels most secure?

(3). We have contemplated the young man in his relation to the general law which demands periodical seasons of rest, and in reference to the influences over him which it would be desirable to check and control by some such institution as the Sabbath. Let us now, for a moment, consider him as designed to be a religious being.

We have already seen that the perfection of man cannot be secured in body or mind by the exclusive cultivation of one set of the bodily organs, or one class of the mental faculties. The idea which I wish now to suggest is, that his perfection cannot be reached without regarding his religious susceptibilities, or considering him as designed to be a religious being. Man has higher interests than those connected with bodily or mental toil. He is not a mere pack-horse; a mere beast of burden; a mere machine to build pyramids, and to dig canals; a mere animal for carrying a load up and down the hills, and along the plains of life. He has other things to attend to than to fell trees, or to plough the ground, or to sink a shaft in the earth, or to sit by a crucible, or to look through a telescope at the stars. He is a moral agent; a sinner; a traveler to another state of existence; a candidate for a higher sphere of being. There is a wretched mistake which men are constantly making, and which is fostered by most of the plans and arrangements of this life, and in many cases by what seems almost to be the necessity of the case. It is, that of regarding this world as all, and time as valuable only as it contributes to the success of the calling to which we have devoted our lives. A man may be so intent on gain, and may regard that as so much the only object of existence, as to consider the time taken up in the perusal of a book, or even the reading of a newspaper—except the portion relat-

ing to the state of the market, and all time spent in social enjoyment with his own family or neighbors, as so much dead loss. With sad reflections on himself, he may think how much money he *might* have made in those very hours now wasted. In like manner, a youth may be so occupied in his classical and professional studies, as to consider all the time taken in cultivating the amenities and social tendencies of his nature, as so much waste. And with a perversity of view not less, men come to feel that this world is the great object of living, and that all the time taken for religion —for the cultivation of the heart, and for prayer, and for praise, is so much wasted. The time employed for that, whether the Sabbath or other days, is the same as abstracting so many dollars and cents from the actual wealth of a community, and is thus a total loss in respect to the purpose for which man should live. With some considerable good, the maxim of Dr. Franklin, so well known and remembered, that "time is money," has done infinite mischief. As though time were nothing else than *money!* As though that were the only object for which man should live! As though literature were nothing, and social enjoyment were nothing, and the claims of benevolence were nothing, and it were nothing to cultivate the heart, and to prepare for another world! To a man under the full influence of such a maxim, a Sabbath, of course, becomes a dead loss—a mere waste; a bog and fen of life; a Campagna, producing only a dull and deadly malaria, blighting every form of life—for it produces nothing in the only purpose for which life is given. It has prevented his ploughing so many roods of land, or selling so many yards of cloth, or manufacturing so many articles in his line, or hastening so many miles on his way to the El Dorado of his hopes. With such a miserable view of human life as this is, the Sabbath is, of course, a waste, a burden, and a curse. But man has higher interests than to make money, and time is given to him just as certainly with reference to those interests as it is to those which pertain to this life. He is intended to be a *religious* being, and until he is, he never reaches the end for which he is made. He has a soul to save. He has entrusted to him the business of preparing for eternity. He is a rational and accountable being, as well as a maker of money; he is a candidate for the crown incorruptible, as well as a builder of houses, and a trafficker in stocks, and corn, and cotton, and broadcloths.

This leads me to say, then, that there is a work which *ought* to be done in every man's soul, just such as contemplated *to be* done on the Sabbath. There is always an accumulation of bad influences in the uninterrupted pursuits of this life, which a man ought periodically to throw off. It is an advantage for a man who is engaged in the world to pause and reflect, lest his worldliness should obtain the entire mastery, and he should forget everything else. Every man is subject to passion, to pride, to envy, to ambition, to impatience under provocation and trial; and it is well to pause lest these things rivit on him the fetters of perpetual servi-

tude. One class of society is in danger of living for gaiety and vanity, and it is well for them to pause and inquire whether there are no higher and nobler ends of life than these. We become excited in the political world; we become engaged in contentions and strifes; we allow unkind thoughts of a neighbor to obtain a lodgment in the soul, and there is an advantage in taking time for cool reflection, and for allowing the tempests of life to blow over, and the mind to become calm again. Need I say here that all the appropriate duties of the Sabbath—the duties of religion—are just fitted to meet these dangers of the soul, and to restore it to its pursuits in this world with a weakened inclination to evil, and with a strengthened purpose to do right?

I am now speaking of the young man as a *religious* being, and of the place which *religion* is designed to occupy in our character, if that character is complete. I have not time to expand the thoughts which suggest themselves on this point, or to illustrate the influence which religion is designed to exert in order to the completion of the just idea *of a man*. Nor have I time to state the advantages growing out of the religious principle, and of the fact that man was designed to be a religious being, of which a young man *might* avail himself, in order to make the most of himself, as an intellectual and a moral being, as a son, a brother, a husband, a father, a man of science, a citizen, a friend of humanity. I will just say, (1.) First, That the religious sentiment, or the religious susceptibility, exists peculiarly in the human bosom—in man alone of all the creatures of God here below, and in *all* men, unless it has been extinguished by vice, or overlaid by worldliness. (2.) Second, That it is the most powerful of all principles that reign in the human soul, and can be made to accomplish as much for good or for evil in the world as any other power or principle in man, whether in the form of *superstition*, binding hundreds of millions of minds to the low forms of religion, so that they can never rise and assert the dignity of their individual nature; or in the form of *fanaticism*, arming millions for conquest, and pouring embattled legions on peaceful nations to spread the desolations of war; or in the form of *principle*, leading man to curb his impetuous passions, and to lead a life of integrity amidst the temptations of the world; or in the form of *benevolence*, leading a man like Howard to spend his life amid the pestilential dungeons of Europe, or Henry Martin, to turn away from the highest literary honors, and to seek the salvation of the wandering heathen. (3.) Third, Religion is destined to play a part in this world which nothing else is, and to accomplish for man what nothing else can; for there is no intellectual cultivation, no grace of manners, no sentiment of honor, honesty, or patriotism, which can do in this world what religion does. It stands by itself—a principle most mighty, and that may be made most efficacious for the good of man. A principle of our nature thus mighty; thus capable of good influences; thus susceptible to perversion; and yet thus cer-

tainly destined to act in the world, has a *claim* on the attention of a young man. He should know what it is; what it means; why it has been placed in the human bosom; and how much may be made of it for this world and the next. I need not say that it is primarily with reference to this that the Sabbath has been appointed.

As an illustration of the power of the religious principles in controlling men, and at the same time to show how deeply the love of the institution which I advocate was imbedded in the hearts of the fathers of this republic. I may refer to one of the earliest incidents in our history. The "Mayflower"—a name now immortal—had crossed the ocean. It had borne its hundred passengers over the vast deep, and after a perilous voyage, had reached the bleak shores of New England in the beginning of winter. The spot which was to furnish a home was now to be selected. The shallop was unshipped, and after sixteen weary days in repairing it, during which the vessel was at anchor, was sent out amidst ice and snow, with some half a dozen pilgrims, to find a suitable place to land. The spray of the sea, says the historian, froze on them, and made their clothes like coats of iron. Five days they wandered about, searching in vain for a suitable landing-place. A storm came on, and the snow and the rain fell, the sea swelled, the rudder broke, the mast and the sail fell overboard. In this storm and cold, without a tent, a house, or the shelter of a rock, the Christian Sabbath approached—the day which they regarded as holy unto God—a day on which they were not to "do any work." What should be done? As the evening before the Sabbath drew on, they pushed over the surf, entered a fair sound, sheltered themselves under the lea of a rise of land, kindled a fire, and on that little island they spent the day in the solemn worship of their Maker. On the next day, their feet touched the rock now sacred as the place of the landing of the Pilgrims. The whole scene—the cold winter, the raging sea, the driving storm, the houseless, homeless island, the families of wives and children in the distance, weary with the voyage, and impatient to land—and yet the sacred observance of a day which they kept from principle, shows how much religion may do to control men—how it may shape human life—how little a man, under the influence of religion, will be affected by surrounding difficulties, and of what importance they regarded the Sabbath to be for themselves and their children.

I have gone through two of the inquiries on which I proposed to address you—the question what the Sabbath is designed to accomplish, and what there is in the condition and prospects of a young man to which such an institution may be adapted. There remains but one other point in order to the completion of the argument which I proposed. It is, How will the observance of the Sabbath contribute to the promotion of these objects?

It would not be right for me to tax your patience much longer,

yet I will venture to ask your attention to a few thoughts in answer to this inquiry.

Keeping, therefore, a young man in view in the aspects already referred to, as an individual, and a member of the community; as demanding periodical seasons of rest; as exposed to temptations; and as endowed by his Creator with a nature susceptible to being influenced by religion, I would submit the following remarks:

(1.) First, That it is now a settled principle that in every community there will be periodical days of cessation from toil; days of *rest*. There never has been a nation which has supposed that the labors of this life were to be continued without interruption, or without periodical seasons for relaxation. In the course of events, and by actual experiment made everywhere, it is settled that the seasons of repose which nature has ordained in the intermitted action of the muscles and in sleep, are *not* enough for man. Everywhere it has been determined that there is a necessity for periodical days of rest frequently recurring; and everywhere men have found that *by* such intervals of rest, they could make more of life, and could be more sure of a healthful body and of a vigorous intellect, than they could by unintermitted toil; and that however such days might be spent, and whatever might be their influence on society, there *would* be, and *must* be, such days of relaxation from toil. This may be regarded as a law as well settled in regard to society, as the law demanding rest in the action of the muscular system, and rest at night. There never has been a lawgiver who has made arrangements for uninterrupted toil, or who has not contemplated some seasons for relaxation, for social pastimes, or for the duties of religion. Such arrangements have entered into all systems of legislation, from Solon and Numa to Charles II.; from the laws of Sparta to the Book of Sports; and they now enter into the arrangements of all monarchs who sway an arbitrary sceptre, and of all freemen who form a constitution for a republic. An arrangement under a human government which should contemplate continued and uninterrupted toil; which should presume that the rest provided by nature in the muscular system or in sleep, was all that is needful for man, would soon fall to pieces by its own weight, and be broken up in confusion.

The facts on this point are too numerous and too well known to make it needful for me to go into any detail. I need not remind the student of Hebrew customs, that the Jew had secured to him by law every seventh day, and every seventh year, and every fiftieth year, in addition to numerous festivals and fasts occurring every year; that this arrangement extended to every class in the community; and that it was guaranteed to the servant as well as to his master, to the peasant as well as the prince, to the operative classes as well as to the ecclesiastical orders. I need not remind the student of classical literature, that periodical seasons of rest were secured under the models of government to which he is accustomed to refer, Greece and Rome. He has only to look into

his Potter or his Eschenburg, to see how this matter was arranged; to see how many days in each year were regarded as sacred—days in which toil was to be suspended; days devoted to the worship of particular gods, or to the commemoration of important events; days in which even the yoke was loosed from the neck of the slave, and he was permitted to taste the sweets of momentary freedom. To such a student I need not say, that if all those festivals had been observed by an individual, the number of days which would have been so employed in each year would have exceeded by far what would be demanded by the observance of the Christian Sabbath; and that in the Grecian and Roman community at large, the amount of actual interruption of the course of business, gain, studies, was much greater than would arise from the observance of the Christian Sabbath after the most rigid of the Scottish, or Genevan, or Puritan notions. To him who has studied the history of the French revolution—and who has not?—I need not say, that in the highest state of the frenzy of that time, and in the midst of the most determined madness against all the institutions of revealed religion, the *decade* was appointed, and every tenth day was made a Sabbath of rest and of relaxation from toil. In all the madness of the leaders of that wonderful revolution, they never dreamed that the physical energies of a people could be uninterruptedly taxed, or that the wheels of commerce, and ambition, and war, could be always rolled on. They knew that the powers of man demanded repose; they knew that there were times when, if the state would live, even the wheels of desolation and crime, clogged with gore, must be suffered periodically to stand still. And need I remind you of the festivals of Egypt, and Persia, and Chaldea? Need I tell you that there is not now a heathen nation, or tribe of men, whose institutions do not contemplate a cessation of this world's business to attend on the worship of the gods? It never yet entered into the brain of any political enthusiast, however crazed, that a nation could prosper without some seasons, periodically occurring, of cessation from labor.

(2.) Secondly, This leads me to observe, that, in this land, whatever other days may be set apart for this purpose, the first day of the week *will be*. We have few festivals, and the general spirit of our people is against their being increased. But the first day of the week *will be* set apart as a day of relaxation from labor; and it can never, without an entire change in our national feelings, habits, and laws, be placed on the same level with the other days of the week. That it is to be a day of rest, a day on which the ordinary affairs of life are to be suspended, is recognised in all our laws and customs; in all contracts between man and man; in the suspension of business in the halls of legislation; in the closing of banks, and stores, and courts, and schools; in the settled habits of the aged, and in the plans of the middle aged, and in the feelings of childhood. You would violate the habits formed through the longest life if you were to deny this to the old man; you

would deprive the child of what he feels, even thus early, to be a birth-right, if you were to compel him to go to the common school on the first day of the week; you would infringe on rights which every young man knows he has, if you were to insert in his indentures of apprenticeship that he was to work on Sunday. The Sabbath in this country can never be made a day of labor. Here and there, indeed, it may be by an individual, but it can never be by the community at large. Here and there a man may go into the woods to fell trees, but the sound of his axe will be different to him from what it is on other days; and in the stillness which reigns around him, when nobody else works, the echoing of his own blows will frighten him. Here and there a man will go into his fields to plough, but he will feel that the eyes of all his neighbors are upon him, and a consciousness of guiltiness will come over him, and he will let his plough stand still in some distant nook of his field, while his neighbor passes by on his way to the house of God. Here and there a man will open his store, but it will be with the uncomfortable feeling which one has always who goes against the general judgment of mankind. Here and there a man will go into his counting-room to post his books, or to write his letters, but he will wish to enter and come out by stealth, and at such times that he will not be likely to be seen. And here and there, too, a man will wander through a forest, or along the margin of a stream, with his fishing-rod or his gun, but the very stillness of the grove, or the warbling of the birds, or the sweet and gentle music of the rivulet, so much in unison with the worship of God, but so little with his own employment, will rebuke him. It is out of the question: this day cannot be made a day of business, or of school-teaching, or of travel, extensively in this land. Then I remark,

(3.) Thirdly, That one of two things is clear: it is to be, alike to the old and the young, an eminent blessing or an eminent curse. If a blessing, it is to be one of the richest that can be vouchsafed to us; if a curse, one of the direst that can come upon the nation. You cannot take out from human life one seventh part, and release all men from the necessity of toil, without producing some decided effect on their intellects and their morals. You cannot disband all your schools, and discharge your clerks and apprentices, and release all the working classes in a community on one day in every seven, without originating new influences that are destined to affect, for good or for evil, every individual and every social organization in the land. If to this discharged multitude, you open every place of amusement and vice; if you establish and legalize fountains of poison at every corner of the street, and along every pathway where they may choose to wander, you may soon bid farewell to everything that is dear to us as citizens and as men—to the whole purchase which our fathers made with so much treasure and so much blood. For we shall have a Sabbath. We shall have it as long as these streams run, and these mountains lift

their heads on high. If it is not a day of rest, and purity, and religion, it will be a day of amusement, and vice, and blasphemy, and crime. We must have the law of God reigning in this land on this subject, or the "Book of Sports;" we must have the quiet, and order, and peace of the Christian Sabbath, or the Roman Saturnalia; we must have a day of worship, or a day of military reviews, and horse-racing, and bull-fights; we must have the Puritan Sabbath, or a day for universal amusement, as at Vienna, a day for the ring, as at Madrid and Mexico, a day for theatres and military parades, as they have at Paris. The question to be determined is this, and this only, whether the nation can afford to have one day in seven as a day of riot and disorder—a Saturnalia occuring more than fifty times in a year, when Rome, in the most palmy days of her virtue, could scarcely survive the effects of one. This leads me to say,

(4). Fourthly, that this day may be made eminently conducive to the maintenance and stability of all that we value in this land. The proper observance of the Sabbath is fitted to make all our young men just such citizens as our institutions contemplate; temperate, intelligent, pure, patriotic, devoted to virtue, to their country, and to their God. The observance of this day is adapted to foster all those virtues which are essential to the purity of the elective franchise; to secure just such instruction as shall fit every man to perform his duty as a citizen in the best manner; and to diffuse over our country just such a tone of morals as shall be adapted, under the great laws of God's government, to perpetuate our liberty. There is not a virtue contemplated by the Constitution as necessary to the permanency of the Republic, which would not be strengthened by the observance of the Sabbath; there is not a vice or crime, on account of which God has overwhelmed other nations, which would not be checked and restrained by such an observance; and there is not a vice or crime, on account of which God in his anger overthrew Sodom, Babylon and Herculaneum, which would not be fostered, hasting on our own destruction by the *desecration* of this day.

It is in reference to such points as these, that every young man is to form his opinion, and regulate his conduct, in regard to the observance of a day of sacred rest. Every young man in view of his constitution and wants as an individual and as a social being; in view of the toils, the trials, the duties, and the temptations of life; in view of the fact that the most momentous interests of liberty and religion in the world are soon to pass into his hands; and in view of the fact that he has interests in other worlds at stake, compared with which all his interests on this globe are trifles, is to make up his mind whether he *needs* such a day of rest, and whether it may be made to contribute to his own future welfare.

Let me add one word in conclusion. It should not be a day of idleness; it need not be a day of gloom. There is enough to be accomplished in every soul, by duties appropriate to the day, to rescue every moment from tedium and ennui. If it were as pleasant

to man to cultivate his heart as it is his intellectual powers; if he felt it to be as momentous to prepare for the life to come as for the present world; if he delighted in the service of his Maker as he does in the society of his friends below, the difficulty would not be that it would be impossible to fill up the day, but that the hours on the Sabbath had taken a more rapid flight than on other days, and that the shades of the evening come around us when our work is but half done. Let this one thought be borne with you to your homes, if no other, that the appropriate work of the Sabbath is *the heart*—all about the heart—all that can bear upon it—all that can make it better—and I am persuaded you will see no want of appropriate employment for one day in seven. See what there is in your heart, permanently abiding there, that demands correction. See what an accumulation of bad influences there may be during the toils and turmoils of the week, that may require removal. See how in the business of the world; in domestic cares; in professional studies or duties, the heart may be neglected, and there may arise a sad disproportion between the growth of the intellect, and the proper affections of the soul. See how, in the gayeties and vanities of life; the pursuits of pleasure; the love of flattery and applause, there may have been a steady growth of bad propensities through the week, not for one moment broken or checked. See how there may have been a silent but steady growth of avarice, pride, or ambition, all through the week, riveting the fetters of slavery on the soul, and bringing you into perpetual and ignoble bondage. See the tendency of all these things to harden the heart; to chill the affections; to stifle the voice of conscience; and to make the mind grovelling and worldly. See what an unnatural growth the intellect of man sometimes attains to, while all the finer feelings of his nature, like fragrant shrubs and beautiful flowers under the dense foliage of a far-spreading oak, are overshadowed and stinted. And then see what in nature and in grace is open for the cultivation of the heart. The worship of God, adapted to assimilate the soul to the Creator; the Bible, full of precepts and promises, bearing directly on the heart; the rich and inexhaustible treasures in our own English religious literature;—the lessons of morality, purity and benevolence, and the sacred effusions of the poetic muse, adapted to raise the soul to God. See a world of sinners and sufferers accessible to your benevolent efforts, and capable of being benefited by your counsels and your prayers. See the ignorant on every hand that need to be instructed; children in every city, village and hamlet, that need to be taught the way to heaven; a world full of the ignorant and the suffering, that demand your sympathy. Then contemplate your own soul—a soul immortal as God—to be saved or lost; its great work of preparation for another state of being perhaps not yet commenced; the whole business of being renovated, pardoned, sanctified, to be yet performed; death to be prepared for and to be met in a proper manner:—look upon these things, and you will not say that God

has not given you enough to do on this holy day to rescue it from dullness and gloom. Every mind may be in such a state that the happiest day of the week may be the day of holy rest; and imperfectly as it is observed and enjoyed now on earth, I am persuaded that there *is* more pure joy, more solid and elevated happiness, more that approximates the enjoyment of heaven on this day, than on any other of the seven. In how many happy hearts on this day is that heaven begun in the soul which shall never end! There is many, many a heart that appreciates all the force and beauty of these words:

Sweet day, thine hours too soon will cease:
  Yet, while they gently roll,
Breathe, Holy Spirit, source of peace,
  A Sabbath o'er my soul.

When will my pilgrimage be done,
  The world's long week be o'er?
That Sabbath dawn, which needs no sun;
  That day which fades no more?

THE CHRISTIAN MINISTER'S LAMENT.

"And when he was come near, he beheld the city, and wept over it."—Luke xix. 41.

The Son of God, the Savior of the world, in tears, was a most touching and affecting spectacle. Since his ascension to heaven, earth has seen nothing like it. What a spectacle, to see divine compassion weeping over a world in ruins! The cause for weeping still exists. Innumerable multitudes are still in their sins, and impenitent, and perishing by millions every year. And never does the Christian minister appear more to possess the spirit of the compassionate Savior, than when he is seen with weeping eyes, endeavoring to persuade men to be reconciled to God, and flee from the wrath to come.

Every minister of Christ is distinguished by an anxious concern for the salvation of men. His heart's desire and prayer to God for his hearers, is, that they may be saved. Having been qualified for his office, and appointed to the discharge of its duties by Christ, he is influenced by the Spirit of Christ; and in nothing is this more manifest than in his display of that compassionate feeling for miserable men, which appeared in the Redeemer when he wept over Jerusalem. Strong are the desires, many the thoughts, and earnest the reasonings, that rise in his mind on this subject. The one, great, intense, all-absorbing passion of his spirit is that he may win souls to Christ. He would compel men to come in; and, while he is blowing the trumpet of the gospel, he anxiously waits to see the people gather around the standard of the Shiloh. To

this object all his talents are directed. His clear understanding of the Scriptures—his aptness to teach—his ability to illustrate and enforce divine truth, so as to render it both intelligible and impressive—his evangelic unction—his zeal, seriousness, and tenderness of spirit—his jealousy for the Lord of Hosts—the hallowed and fervid eloquence with which his lips have been touched by the live coal from the altar of devotion—the faith and love which render his work solemn and delightful to himself, and cause him to concentrate upon it the best energies of his intellect and heart, are *all* subservient to this one purpose. And his feelings are perfectly natural; for this is the object of his labors. The very form into which his message is cast is scarcely anything else than the words whereby we must be saved. His theme is the common salvation. With the Baptist he cries in the ears of his auditors: "Flee from the wrath to come."

Regarding his talents, his time, his energies, his whole life, as marked by the seal, as bound by the vow of consecration to Christ; believing himself to have been chosen by the Captain of our salvation to active service in the Christian warfare, with what anxiety does he look for the success of his labors! How much is he gratified to see that the word of the Lord has free course and is glorified—to find that he does not labor in vain, nor spend his strength for nought! With what pleasure does he hear those to whom he has faithfully delivered his message show the power with which it has been received, by crying out, in the language of conviction, "What must we do to be saved?" And, on the other hand, how bitterly does he lament the want of success! How much does he experience of the sadness of disappointment and the sickness of hope deferred, when the words he proclaims become like water spilt upon the ground—as seed sown by the way side, or in its growth choked with thorns; like characters traced on the sand, or a ship's track in the sea, that soon disappears; exclaiming, in the language of the prophet, "Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?"

The field of a Christian minister's benevolence is eternity; he builds for eternity—he studies, labors, prays, instructs, warns, invites for eternity: all that he undertakes relates to eternity. His object is that the soul may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus. Time in his estimation derives its importance from eternity, since it affords the opportunity of sowing that seed of the Spirit which shall grow up into everlasting life, and be gathered as the never ending harvest of the soul, the immortal reward of piety and faith. The interests which he pleads are so illimitable and vast—the evils to be avoided are so appalling, and the good to be secured so transporting—the pit from which the sinner is drawn up so dark, so deep, so dreadful—the throne to which he is to be raised so glorious, so high, so blissful—the realities of another world partake so much of the character of infinity, that the benevolence of a Christian minister is generally a sublime emotion, an absorbing

feeling that almost annihilates all others, and frequently becomes deep even to melancholy, or passionate to the extreme of agony. He labors in the ministry of the Gospel, if by any means he may save some, and his earnestness is that of a person rescuing others from the most terrible calamities, saving them with fear, "pulling them out of the fire." Is it not natural that very partial success should be far from satisfying benevolence of this description? Can anything surpass the chilling disappoint of him who, with a heart thus sublimed or rather consumed with love, preaches to men in vain, stretching out his hand all day long to a gain-saying people? and who, hearing the storm coming, seeing the sky lower, and blue flames kindle in the air, signs of the fiery deluge above,—warns, without alarming, the giddy multitude, appearing to them like Lot to his sons-in-law when he said, "Up, get ye out of this place, for God will destroy this city."

Solemn to him is the thought of the day when he must stand with his hearers at the bar of God, and appear as a witness against those who have not profited by his ministry; and, however reluctantly, give in his evidence against them. How terrible to him the fear of meeting, at the left hand of Judge, those whom he had so often admonished and invited, in whose ears he had spoken the words of life every week for many, many years! How harrowing to his feelings to witness the death-bed of some of his hearers, and see them sink in death without hope, and recollect with what interest he had often regarded them in the sanctuary when their fears were alarmed by the terrors of the Lord, and they seemed awakened to compunctious feeling for sin, or when they appeared to be melted down by the love of Christ, or overwhelmed with the glories and miracles of the cross! Oh! is *this* the end of my labors? Have I been heaping consuming coals of fire on the heads of those for whom I hoped I was the means of bringing down the showers of heaven's blessings? Must the tree I have so long and so anxiously tended and watered, be plucked up by the roots and cast into the flames? How have I been disappointed in my dearest hopes! I was anticipating the satisfaction I should enjoy at the last day, and was already saying with the apostle, "What is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of the Lord Jesus at his coming?" How has my expectation been cut off! How has it become like the morning cloud, or early dew which goeth away? "Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?"

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SERMON CCCCXXV.

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THE FAITH DELIVERED TO THE SAINTS.

Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you, that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered to the saints.—Epistle of Jude, 3d verse.

Assembled as the ministers and servants of God, it becomes us to review the commission under which we act, and the duties it imposes. That commission is the Gospel of Christ, whose heavenly precepts are our guide, and whose spirit is our Counsellor.

By the Faith once delivered to the Saints, is meant that system of truth and grace which was given by prophets, and by Jesus Christ and his apostles to the people of God. It is that system of truth which embodies and makes known to us what are the existing ultimate facts in the moral kingdom of God—His character, and the laws of his government—the character and condition of its subjects—the plan of redemption—the conditions of salvation, and the future state of souls. These, with their kindred and essential truths, constitute the facts which we are to receive upon the testimony of God, who has revealed them to us. Hence they are denominated, the Faith, that is a system of truth to be believed.

As these existing ultimate facts are taught to men, they become doctrines—divine truths, in which men are to be instructed.

The more general features of this system, are, God's uncontrolled sovereignty—the apostacy and sinfulness of man—his free agency and moral obligation—the Deity, incarnation and atonement of Christ—the necessity of regeneration, and the agency of the Holy Spirit, in executing the purpose of God to save sinners; while such as are incorrigible are left to reap the fruits of their own depravity.

First, I remark, by this system of truth Christ established his

kingdom in this world; and these are the doctrines which the apostles inculcated and defended, and which have been handed down to us by the wisest and best of men in every age.

1. Passing the obvious and acknowledged fact of God's unlimited sovereignty, we meet as the earliest instruction of Jesus Christ, the doctrine of the entire sinfulness and moral helplessness of man. The nature and plan of his gracious economy rested upon this ground alone. He expressly declares, that his Gospel is suited only to apostate and ruined men. It is emphatically a system of mercy, and purely of mercy. It in no case admits the possibility of salvation on the ground of original or partial merit, or of mercy given to remedy the defect of human worth.

Jesus Christ repeats and sanctions prophecy: "The people that sat in darkness saw a great light, and to them that sat in the region and shadow of death light is sprung up." And surely darkness and death, those dread symbols of the eternal pit, are no doubtful testimony of man's guilt and helplessness.

Paul and the other disciples enforced the same melancholy truth. The graphic hand of the apostle has drawn in shades of night, the depraved character of man, and though drawn eighteen centuries ago, it is the living portraiture of every sinner now. "The carnal mind is enmity against God, for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be; dead in trespasses and sins." This charge is universal. It is not the picture of some distant and solitary degradation, where causes most malignant combine to pollute and prostrate: no, all have sinned and come short of the glory of God. The entire character of human loyalty is ended; all have gone out of the way; there is none that doeth good, no, not one; death has passed upon all men.

This melancholy fact has come down to us through the hands of men venerable for wisdom and holiness. In this moral degradation and death, we recognize the doctrine of man's *native* corruption and *entire* sinfulness. We are taught, that, from the apostacy of Adam flowed the stream of moral pollution and debasement, and that man is helpless without the grace of God in Christ. We here recognize more than the simple predominance of the animal propensities over the moral sense, as constituting our inheritance from the fall: the heart is diseased, and the entire moral character in ruins.

2. Upon this ruined state of man, succeeded the provisions of the atonement.

"I came not to call the righteous but sinners to repentance;" says the Saviour. "They that are whole need not a physician, but they that are sick—I am the way, the truth, and the life—I am the light of the world—If I be lifted up, I will draw all men unto me."

In the atonement of Christ, he would have us recognize universal and unconditional mercy, in the provisions of pardon and proffers of salvation to all mankind.

This atonement in the amplitude of its provisions, was the theme of the apostles' preaching every where. They were literally filled and enraptured with the doctrine of the cross—"Christ," our "passover," "propitiation," "sacrifice"—"without the shedding of blood, no remission." The atonement of Christ, we are authorized to regard as the glorious devising of the Infinite Jehovah to illustrate the divine perfections, to advance and secure the honor and stability of the divine government, and to save the lost race of men. We are to regard it as adequate for all the purposes of man's salvation; as the ground for the proffer of pardon to all; its claims binding on all; its blessings open to all; and its rejection as constituting the guilt and condemnation of the soul. While we would limit the power and proffers of the blood of Christ only by the boundary of human necessity, we would not abridge at all the obligations and responsibilities of the sinner. We do not regard the atonement, as expressive of God eager in the pursuit of justice, bent upon the renewed vindication of his injured honor; for then he might have swept another race of rebels to the pit: but we view his designs as replete with wisdom and "*mercy*, encompassing justice," and giving an infinite advance in moral government. With us, mercy leads the way; and it is for salvation that Christ appears and dies, while justice is honored and law enforced.

We do not view the atonement as a mere symbolic representation, on the one hand, nor on the other as the simple creation of justice in its demands for vengeance; but rather as the device of love, mercy, and wisdom; a glorious and gracious substitution for the guilty.

With such a death in view, the death of the adorable Son of God, we behold God just, in justifying the believer; we are assured that all who believe shall be saved.

We are not troubled, nor would the gospel embarrass our ministry with the speculations of the schools as to the exact purchase of the death of Christ: but we behold in God, through Christ, the redemption of the world; justice honored; moral government secured; God satisfied; and from his glorious nature we behold flowing forth rivers of life and salvation to the lost; mercy, swift on its wing as the white-robed seraph; light breaking from the throne; the teachings of truth; the power of God and the wisdom of God unto salvation; grace abounding to the chief of sinners; angels of light and love ministering to men, rocking the cradle of infancy, and leading the weary patriarch home: the grace and power of the Holy Ghost perfecting the purposes of mercy in Christ to a ruined world. Call this what you please; the purchase of Christ; a part of his atonement; or the necessary, the natural outgoings of the grace of God to the guilty and the lost, where justice and law, truth and government, are honored and secured by the substituted merits and death of a divine Saviour. All this "is just like God"—just what we

should expect him to do, in view of Christ. All the attributes of his nature conspire to bless and save; blending and radiating forth in the richness and glories of salvation to the lost and dying. I will not ask, did Christ purchase exactly all this, but I behold in the parental, kind, and blessed God, a nature infinitely lovely, and ready to restore to his arms, and raise to his throne every returning apostate. We rather behold and welcome all this, from the overflowing exuberance of eternal love, than from the rigid exactions of a commercial purchase. The sun no more bursts upon the world when the clouds are scattered, than the exhaustless love and grace of God flow forth in streams of salvation when the vicarious atonement is fully made.

Moreover, while we admire in all this the richness of divine grace, we never forget, that it is through the death of Christ, his advocacy, his spirit, his righteousness, that these blessings of life and heaven are opened and secured to the lost. The veil has been lifted from heavenly glories by his hand alone, and our life and hope, with every aid and agency that attend us from the cradle to the grave and to heaven, we refer gratefully and exclusively to the blood of Christ.

3. Upon the ground of this atonement, Christ has rested the obligations of men to repent, or, rather, made them doubly imperative, and pronounces their condemnation as the fruit of its rejection; and on its universal rejection rises the necessity of divine and sovereign power to secure its gracious purposes.

Christ saw and met the melancholy fact, that his love would be despised. His own received him not. The cry every where arose, Have me excused! Away with him! One universal burst of disaffection moved the multitudes of wretched men.

In view of this rejection of his salvation, Christ in his first public address presented the doctrine of sovereign and distinguishing grace; "Many widows were in Israel when the heavens were shut up for three years and six months, but unto none of them was Elias sent save unto Sarepta, a city of Sidon; and many lepers were in Israel in the days of Eliseus the prophet, but none of them were cleansed but Naaman, the Syrian. All that the Father giveth me shall come unto me. Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you."

In the apostles' teachings we meet the same fact of Christ's rejection, and everywhere they preached the doctrine of special, divine sovereignty in the salvation of men. They rested their hope of success on God alone. No force of means, no power of persuasion, no majesty of miracles, though coming in the glories of heaven or the commanding terrors of the judgment, could subdue the soul. Amid the crowds of rebellious men madly rushing to death, the apostles beheld the purpose of God to rescue from an apostate race a seed to serve him, made willing in the day of his power.

And how did Paul receive the announcement of this gracious

purpose? Beholding this universal apostacy and rejection of Christ, "There is a remnant," he cries; but how? According to the election of grace. "All things work together for good to them that are called, according to *his* purpose."—"That the purpose of God according to election might stand." God hath saved us and called us by a holy calling." But how? "Not according to our works, but according to his own purpose." That is, God has a settled purpose in regard to men, and in the course of his providence that purpose becomes developed and executed; and men may as well object to the providence as to the purpose of God. What is his providence but the exhibition of his purposes of grace—purposes which do not rest on the blind contingencies of human conduct, but on his own sovereign pleasure? "Whom he did foreknow, he did predestinate, and whom he did predestinate, them he also called." "We have obtained an inheritance," saith Paul, "being predestinated according to the purpose of *Him* who worketh all things according to the counsel of his own will." Filled with confidence by the unshaken securities of grace, he exclaims, "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? I endure all things for the elect's sake. An apostle according to the faith of God's elect."

This doctrine of distinguishing sovereignty is seen as plainly in nature and providence as in the Bible. Why is it calm to-day, and storms to-morrow? Why yonder heaves the trembling earth, here firm as everlasting hills? Why that blushing health and beauty, and this pale form and sickly grief? The giant mind, and feebleness of thought? Here is settled reason and manly purpose, there the disordered mind, the clanking chains, the maniac's dreary home. Why your vigor and your life; the cold form prematurely in the grave? That hoary head; the infant in its shroud? Are these referred to causes within your own control? What then rules the winds, and waves, and all the secret ministers of God? "They are causes still." True, and such they are as stamp their full efficiency with the power of God.

And is it not as wise and good that God should have his plan, his purpose and decree, to raise immortal souls to heaven through Jesus Christ, as to guide the flight and falling of a sparrow? To clothe the fields of heavenly light and fill the mansions of his holiness and glory, as to gem the firmament with stars and mantle the earth with bloom and waving harvests?

"But human freedom is invaded." Not at all. This is the only ground where the sovereignty of God in the execution of his purposes, does not invade and enchain the freedom of man. Life you can not give, nor lengthen out one hour. Health and beauty are not within thy reach. The winds and waves, the thunders and the storms, the slightest breeze, the evening dew, are all remote from thy control. But where is the infringement of moral freedom either when in sin, in turning to God, or in aspirations for heaven? Ah, it is because man is free in morals

religion, that he so dreads in sin the sovereignty of God, the account his proffered grace demands. It is sovereignty over ıd, and in its majesty of wisdom and power, leaves that dread ponsibility man fears to meet.

4. Hence Jesus Christ explicitly declared the obligation of the ıner to meet the whole will of God, demanding repentance and ıith as the conditions of pardon. This was the burden of his reaching; and his apostles followed in his steps. On the day of Pentecost, and in the prison of Philippi, and in every place, they testified of repentance and faith in God as voluntary acts of the human mind. The obligations of men to be holy and to serve God are not suspended and lost in his sovereign grace, nor are they created by his purposes of efficient action on the soul.

5. The doctrine of regeneration, and the agency of the Holy Spirit in effecting it, were strong features in the Gospel of Christ. "Ye must be born again. Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he can not see the kingdom of God." The apostle adds, "Ye are saved by the washing of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Ghost."

We are taught that every serious reflection, every right emotion, every holy affection in the soul of man, is the production of the Spirit of God. There is no support for belief in the original or acquired powers of the soul for the attainment of personal holiness; nor does the nature of man yield its enmity to God under the influence of moral suasion, independently of the divine spirit. We see his obligation to do his duty, even the whole will of God, as he is required; but such is his native and nurtured depravity, that without the special and direct influence of the Holy Spirit on his heart, awakening and regenerating to a new life, he will never love nor serve God.

While the Redeemer and the entire ministry of inspired men honor the word of God and all the instrumentalities of grace,—the church, the ministry, the ordinances, all designed for the salvation of men, and most happily adapted to the end in view,—yet the hope and certainty of success rests not here. Truth, though divine, and eloquence inspired; men and angels concurrent; every motive urged on hope and fear; all of mercy and of heaven, of judgment and despair, pressing on the heart; with this alone the sinner never yields his enmity to God and holiness.

> The transformation of apostate man,
> From fool to wise, from earthly to divine,
> Is work for Him that made him.

Our reliance is on the Spirit to regenerate and save. He does it in sovereign pleasure, and hence we confide in Him. He does it through the truth, and hence we love and preach the word. Here preciousness infinite gathers around the ministrations of truth, and glory divine invests the Spirit of God.

6. It is necessary merely to allude to those kindred and essen-

tial truths with which Christ introduced his kingdom, and committed it to his disciples.—The pledge of continued grace to the believer; the demand for Christian efforts and the value of holy obedience; the resurrection and the judgment, the acceptance of the righteous, and the endless misery of the wicked.

All these the Apostles fortified and enforced, ever making justification by faith alone and the pledge of heavenly grace the ground of their labor and their hopes. Holding up the promise of aid divine and the vision of heavenly glories, they cry, lay aside every weight and the sin that doth so easily beset us and let us run with patience the race set before us. And to the Christian, in his toils and conflicts, this is like the high stimulus of promised and certain victory to the girded soldier on the battle-field; he pants after God and presses onward to the skies.

These were the doctrines that lingered with the men of God through the perils of that night of centuries, and that so cheered the darkness of their prisons and their mountain glens. The Reformers, waking the world from the midnight of delusion and sin, were strongly imbued with these evangelical sentiments; Wickliffe, Luther, Calvin, Zuingle and Knox, with their illustrious coadjutors, are known too well by the slander of their principles and fiery persecution, yet they rise before us and will forever shine as stars in the firmament of mind, whose course of evangelical piety, so well defined, will ever mark the surest and the brightest path to honor and to God.

We hail with admiration and reverence these same doctrines in the piety, toils and persecution of our Puritan and Huguenot ancestry, and trace their apostolical succession, their union to Christ and security of covenanted mercies, in their love and defence of *the faith delivered to the saints.*

In the Mathers, Brainerd, Edwards, and other cotemporaries and successors to the honored of our pilgrim fathers, with those who laid the foundation of our constitutional and tolerant polity, we find the vigorous and holy workings of this faith, rearing the structure of national piety, giving to the world the brightest evidence of political integrity, missionary zeal, and religious purity. Look at the institutions of law, learning, and benevolent piety; and who are the men and the churches that have given them a cordial and manly support? With modesty and with gratitude, we can ask in confidence, is not the church of our inheritance, strong in her faith and love of truth and Christ? We believe these evangelical doctrines to be the system of our faith and ministry.—And as we receive it, can that system be defective? Are not the truths I have reviewed, as we receive them, the doctrines of grace? Are not these the foundations of hope —the heavenly seed committed to our hands? Have not the gardens of God been cultivated with these, and from them harvests grown, enriching and filling the prepared mansions of heaven? Ask the illustrious dead that once filled our pulpits. Bless-

ed spirits, what is their response? Ask the thousands that have gone up in chariots of salvation to the skies. Ask the ten thousand waiting disciples of Christ, kindling with joys divine. What mean these wide and expanding efforts of Christian love? Whence have gone the messengers of mercy to pagan lands? Where have the suns of light and the grace of God spread the richest scenes of Pentecost? If these are not the doctrines of grace, what are they? If not, where shall we find them?

Embracing these doctrines as our inheritance and our faith, we have no sympathy with the novelties of human device even in their ministration. We love those heavenly lights of experience, which a century ago, made these gardens of God fresh and fruitful, attesting the truth by the salvation of thousands. We love the ways our fathers trod to righteousness and heaven.

And still less have we sympathy or patience with the speculations of that philosophy, so confidently asserting such advance in theological science, that the heart in its desperate wickedness is to be subdued by its new-found methods of presenting truth, and the very sceptic won back to the love of God and duty by the perception of its harmony and consistency with the deductions of cultivated intellect. To these we give no advocacy, no support.

In the SECOND place, we are naturally led to the importance of the injunction of the text to "*contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints.*"

With all the virtue and benignity of this system it has never been permitted to advance in this world without vigorous opposition. The persecuted house of Jacob under Pharaoh, the oppression and the murders of Egypt, are but the early symbols of unwearied opposition and enmity to the truth and the people of God. The repeated wars of Israel are living types of the more fatal conflict between truth and error. Early was the cry against the Son of God; he is no friend of Cæsar—if we let him alone, the Romans will come and take away our place and our nation —Not this man but Barabas. As the Apostles unfolded the faith of Christ, their persecution began. The holy martyrs succeeded them—The ten persecutions—the Lollards—the Waldenses—the Reformers—the Puritans—the still persecuted Protestants of the East—all clinging to this same "faith" in their sufferings unto death, exhibit the hostility of man to the truth. And who but evangelical Christians have ever been the subjects of continued persecution? Their "faith" stands sublimely alone in the history of its origin, its progress, its sufferings and its hopes. It calls for our defence as it merits our confidence and love.

1. We should contend for this faith because it gives the only true delineation of human character and standard of human duty. Here are the statutes of a divine, moral administration; the revealed character and will of God; the specific rule of life, adapt-

ed to our peculiar condition. Obscure these and we wander in darkness. Destroy these and we are lost. Here is the lamp of our feet and the light of our path. The wisdom of God and the power of God unto salvation. These gone and there is no stimulus to virtue, and no security of peace.

I do not mean that without these we have no substitute from the Bible, but I mean, if we reject that system of faith which we have considered, we can obtain no substitute from the Bible, nor from any other source. Try the experiment of framing a system of faith that shall exclude these evangelical features and at the same time retain all possible affinity besides to the gospel. Follow its history and it soon breaks forth into fanaticism and delusion, or, kindred to infidelity, sinks into its cold and cheerless bosom. Religion dies and hope expires.

Remove from the gospel man's entire sinfulness and condemnation—salvation by Chirst alone as a divine Redeemer—sovereign grace—the Spirit's agency and power—promised good to the saints—justification by faith, and future awards, and what is there left? The inspired pages, now radiant with light, are a cheerless blank—where now they are instinct with the wisdom and the power of God, tender and subduing with the love of Christ, sustaining and cheering by the spirit of promise, all is lifeless and cold.

2, We should defend this faith, for it uniformly aids in the advance and security of civil liberty.

An interesting chapter in the improvement of man is here opened. The "faith" before us, recognizing the moral equality of our race by nature, and their uniform dependence upon God, has created a free church, whose principles of truth and polity have ever been at war with all human distinctions and unrighteous oppression. It would remove popular ignorance and give to every man the knowledge of his personal rights. Rectifying the obliquities of the heart, it would dispose all men to justice and charity.

I present this "faith" with that ecclesiastical polity almost uniformly associated with it, in distinction from the papacy, the prelacy and the ordinary policy of Arminianism wherever found. The history of centuries settles indubitably the fact, that the workings of the papacy and the prelacy have been at war with liberal sentiments, with popular rights and improvement, just the result that might have been predicted from their peculiar principles. At the same time the more recent rise of other Arminian communities has from their beginning absorbed all popular rights in the power of the clergy, and constructed a colossal system adverse to representative and republican liberty. The night of ages—the revolution of 1688—the Reformation—our own Revolution, and the action of these systems to the present hour, confirm this position, and fearfully admonish us of our duty and our perils.

On the contrary, the "faith" we embrace, has ever been the advocate and hand-maid of freedom of conscience, popular educa-

tion, and civil liberty. We see the Cantons of the Swiss and other Calvinists of Europe; the Puritans of England infusing into the British constitution, the principles of popular freedom; our pilgrim fathers constructing their free churches, which gave to the world, even before they dreamed of it, the active elements of a free state, too vigorous for the strong arm of foreign power to control. It is the peculiarity of the system we have advocated, that it can live everywhere, under every form of government, and work its way against all adverse interests. At the same time it acts with elastic energy against every abuse of power, and seeks to root out of the human heart the very elements of lordliness and oppression.

We believe this "faith" adequate to all the necessities of the human family. There are evils in the personal and civil relations of men, that we all deplore, and we have waited for ages in vain upon legislative enactments to remove them. Their origin lies beyond the reach of legislative control, whether issuing from civil or ecclesiastical courts. The evils to which I allude admit of no direct and sudden remedy. They grow out of the depravity of the human heart and the consequent imperfections of organized communities, and must be left to the applications and influences of the gospel, which alone is found adequate to cure the diseases of the heart, and the evils of social life.

It was obviously not the design of the Saviour to form his church to oppose, in their collective, legislative capacity the great evils of organized society. The gospel embodies great principles, and associates Christians in churches for the culture of social religion, to watch over each other, to form one harmonious family, and from the unity, peace and charity of their sanctified brotherhood, to commend Christ and religion to the world. It was never intended that Christians should war upon the world by edicts, denunciatory enactments, and probably not to advance far in legislative action upon abstract questions of casuistry even within the bosom of the church, except by Scriptural adjudication upon cases of alleged and actual delinquency, and least of all to act on outward civil relations. By assailing the evils of social life, in confederated masses or ecclesiastical bodies, we not only array the world against the church, but raise divisions and hostilities within our own borders.

There are certain evils which no legislative action will cure. Their removal depends wholly upon the establishment of correct moral principles. Such evils the Bible passes in silence, or incidentally presents as the fruits of sin. And yet it discloses general principles, applicable when understood to every case, and as valuable and efficient as direct, positive precepts can be. This is pre-eminently true of ecclesiastical legislation, which is a thing of its own sort, and by Christ himself is restricted to its own sphere.

Ecclesiastical legislation against specific, social evils, is, in most cases like lopping the branches of an exuberent tree, which serves only to increase new and more vigorous shoots from the parent

stock. But the "faith" of our adoption strikes at the root of all evil, and by the diffusion of its spirit, we may expect the passing away as by enchantment, the evils of life, till human ignorance, servitude and oppression shall end, and the jubilee of universal liberty break upon the ravished ears of a redeemed race.

"To me," says an able writer, "it seems that either the moral and intellectual changes (desired) must be despaired of entirely, or the chief agent in effecting them must be Christianity—not Christianity in the form of law, concerning itself with outward civil relations, but the Christianity of light and love."

While this position is fortified by history, its origin is found in the peculiar character of our religious sentiments and the necessary ecclesiastical principles attending them.

The sentiments that reduce mankind to one common level as to moral necessities, and subject all alike to the government of a sovereign God, each to render unqualified submission and each to meet the same conditions of salvation; the principles which recognize the parity of the clergy, rejecting all hierarchal distinctions and prerogative and saving virtue of administered rites, and throw upon the people individual and personal responsibility, such sentiments and principles naturally become the foundation and support of civil liberty, or war even unto death against the encroachment of unrighteous oppression. It was the liberalizing influence of these sentiments that gave to Geneva her free church and independent state. And what but these kept alive the indomitable spirit of civil liberty in the Cantons of Switzerland? What but these same sentiments gave to England all the civil liberty she ever knew? What but these laid the foundation of American churches, and ere our Pilgrim fathers were aware of it, gave birth to all the elements of a gigantic civil government? These are the sentiments which are not only to emancipate the soul from the bondage of sin, but to give civil liberty to the world. "The democratic extreme," says D'Aubigne, "issued from Switzerland and France. One of Calvin's predecessors then hoisted the flag which the powerful arm of the Genevan Reformer was to lift again in after years, and plant in France, Switzerland, Holland, Scotland and even in England, whence it was a century later to cross the Atlantic and summon North America to take her rank among the nations." While these sentiments and principles, commending their practical results to the world, would be working out the problem of universal liberty, it is easy to frame a system of church polity, built on sentiments conflicting with these, with great show of popular liberty, and indeed almost of popular licentiousness, which, at the same time shall enact and execute the most stringent laws, taking away substantially every popular immunity and resting all power and property ecclesiastical, in the hands of the clergy, and which shall embody all the elements of the most vigorous and oppressive monarchy, even with its boastful show of popular rights. If the

civil liberties of this country shall ever pass away, they will die through the preliminary and insidious working of corrupted religious principles. And if they are to live unto the light of better days, evangelical religion will herald them to the world.

3. We should earnestly contend for *the faith* because the only satisfactory evidence of being in the true succession of Christ's disciples, is to be found in the possession of the truth, and in the blessing of God upon its ministrations.

The kingdom of Christ consists in the establishment of moral principles, in truth explained, recognized and embraced by redeemed men. His church is to be found only where these principles are known, where this heaven-born truth is found. "The Bible, and the Bible only," says, Chillingworth, "is the religion of Protestants." The Bible is the divine charter on which the church is founded. These oracles of God become the confession of our faith and our common law. Where these are found, embraced and defended, their spirit cherished and their purposes carried out, there are the divinely ordered elements of Christ's kingdom, there is the true church of God. There, I repeat, is the divine charter on which the church is founded, and if the blessing of God rests here, the evidence is complete and irresistible, that here lies the true succession. The divine right thus secured, is transferred, not as senseless heraldy, by will and deed, not by human hands imposed; but whoever have the Bible, embrace its essential truths, submit to its laws, cherish its spirit, and execute its purposes, they inherit its immunities and succeed to all the honors and powers of the only apostolic church.

Here is a right derived from God; the succession of a spiritual Christianity, which can not be resolved into mere externals, nor secured by seals, rites, keys, from any or all of human investments, from which everything spiritual has fled. Who would look for the succession of a Christian church and a spiritual ministry in the hordes of merciless and profligate monks, or in the beneficed and secularized clergy of England, and deny it to Baxter, Cranmer, and Bunyan, holy men of God, valiant for the truth, persecuted for righteousness' sake, and doing wonders in the name of Christ. With equal propriety might Bonaparte, wasting on his ocean-rock, and his wandering family, be recognized as the ruling powers of continental Europe, to the rejection of its rightful sovereigns. As soon regard the asphaltic slime-pits, immersing the fallen towers and palaces of Babylon, as the living city of millions. As the Apostle to the Gentiles declared the evidence of his commission to consist in the *truth* proclaimed, and not in ordinances administered; and as the church is based upon the *truth*, so she expects her ministry to be accredited of God, not in ordinances, not in baptisms, confirmations, and indulgences, but in their *ministrations of truth.*

The true church demands for her ministry the attending and attesting symbols of the Holy Ghost. She is never satisfied with

the worshipers of a formal Christianity, that talks more of *the* Church, its "services, covenant mercies." its liturgy and shadowing rights, than of sin, of justification by faith, the sovereignty of God, or regeneration and holiness of life. The kingdom of Christ requires ministrations that shall abase the soul with the consciousness of its own guilt and wretchedness, and that shall exalt God alone in the work of its renewal and reunion to himself. With such qualifications and such a succession we are satisfied. We have here a living, divine right, a true Christian succession. And without this inspired truth and God's blessing, where can that succession be found?

We are happy to recognize as Christians, and to find our fellowship with Leighton, Sherlock, and Tillotson, valiant for the truth, and powerful amid the profligacy of courts; or with Massillon and Bourdaloue, rebuking sin on the throne. And no less do we rejoice to commune with Fenelon in exile, persecuted, yet radiant in the charity and glory of Christ; with Oberlin, warm-hearted amid the mountain snows of Switzerland; with Felix Neff on the icy Alps, and with Owen, Bunyan, and Doddridge, and Pearce, and Fuller, and the humble followers of Christ everywhere, girded with his truth, and gathering the credentials of their office and their spirit from the attending grace and renewing power of God.

What, in comparison with this are all the investments of a gorgeous pontificate, the regal prelacy, robed, mitred, and enthroned in scarlet on the seven hills, drunk with blood, and claiming the prelatical empire of the world? Or what the pretensions of that less consistent system, that has no higher title to its boasted succession than the stained sceptre of a profligate usurper, or the feeble arm of a gay woman?

4. The faith we have defined is the grand instrument of conversion to God and sanctification for heaven.

While we refer to the agency of the Holy Spirit the salvation of every soul that believeth, and would, in no way, abridge the sovereignty of God, we are never to regard the work of saving men irrespective of such means as are adapted to the nature of the mind, and consistent with our moral agency.

Man may indeed be passive as to that mysterious act performed by the Holy Spirit in regeneration; yet, at the same time, active and voluntary, as a moral agent in view of the law, interest, and duty. It is in view of truth that he reflects, is convinced of sin, repents, believes, and seeks conformity to God. And whatever is involved in that sublime work of the soul's renewal by the Holy Spirit, there is no violence to our nature, nor suspension of moral agency. The scriptures declare, that it is by the truth that the Spirit regenerates and saves, and so obvious and so essential is the intervention of truth, that the very power of the Spirit is made to rest here. "The *truth* shall make you free. Sanctify them through thy truth; thy word is truth." "God hath from the

beginning chosen you to salvation through the sactification of the Spirit and the belief of the truth." We have no authority for asserting that the Spirit renews and saves but by the truth. At any rate, we find the territory of all spiritual religion extended only as the truth has shed its heavenly light; and with the glorious prospective of man's salvation in view, we are summoned to the work of preaching the gospel to every creature.

I advance upon this position, and ask, where is spiritural religion found, where vital godliness, where revivals of religion, but where the *faith of our adoption* is known? Revivals of religion are the fruits of *this faith;* not such as are wild, fitful, and evanescent, wrecking the best interests of society, and bringing in fatal delusion; but such as are deep, solemn, pure, and lasting in their results; that enlighten, elevate, and refine the aspect of society.

These truths pour a flood of light on the mind, and kindle the fires of the judgment around the heart; they awaken the powerful sensibilities of the soul, summoning to an audience with death, God, and eternal scenes; they leave no refuge, no rest, but the Rock of Ages, no hope but the love of Christ.

This is the truth the Spirit honors; it is the fire and the hammer that break the rock; the arrow of the Almighty that drinks up the spirit; the source of peace and joy.

This faith, as we view it, is incorporated with the history of piety and all pure religion. Everywhere we see it verified; ye are saved through the sanctification of the Spirit and the belief of the truth; the truth shall make you free.

Men are not the mere passive recipients of grace; but they are saved by being taught, persuaded, drawn by motives of truth and righteousness; in view of testimony they believe; of sin charged upon them, they are convinced; before God, a sovereign judge, they fear, tremble, and with conscious freedom and responsibility, submit to his authority and the conditions of grace. With Christ a substituted sufferer and Saviour, and the Spirit to sanctify, with the pledge of protection and support, heaven in view, they press onward to the skies.

5. This faith is the grand source and security of all benevolent efforts. The greatest achievements of good in this world—the most signal moral revolutions have been found in connection with this system of faith. This faith presents, in their true light, the clashings of contending interests, the violent onsets of passion, the sweeping of insatiate ambition. Not a hill, nor a valley—not an ocean, nor a stream, but speaks of revenge and war. To fill every relief, there rise disease, derangement and death, while the great mass of mankind are crowding in one broad, deep, and unbroken column to hell.

Amid all this gloom, desolation and death, the system we advocate presents redemption by Christ—*free salvation.* It rises the solitary star of hope in the horizon of unbroken night. The charity it breathes and enkindles, looking out upon the sickly

and dying aspect of the world, turning in grief, with a melting and despairing eye, it reads, and with rapture, too, it reads, there is balm in Gilead, and a Physician there.

This redemption comes not alone to teach, to guide by example; not to attest truth simply, but to give life and immortality —a reprieve from death—suspension of justice, that man may live. It goes forth like its author, to bless and save. The benevolence it inspires seeks the application of its remedy. And as the opposing influences of sin are so appaling, the ocean of woe so deep and shoreless as almost to forbid effort, this system brings an auxiliary, an encouragement, nowhere known but here—the *promise of Almighty power* to execute the purposes of grace, to crown every effort of the saints with an abundant blessing.

Under this system of divine purposes, gracious sovereignty and electing love, we know that religion will revive and spread, multitudes be saved; and God has drawn no limits to our labors and our hopes. Under this system, we enter the wilderness, dark as night, and the pillar of fire is there. Plunge into the sea, and its waves retire. Through Christ we can do all things.

Awakened by the sin and suffering, the condemnation of thousands, their salvation presented by Christ, every motive and auxiliary to secure it, what can more arouse the believer in this truth to labor and die to extend its knowledge to every sinner on the face of the globe? Here are stimulants to the most powerful and untiring activity. I see not how the believer's moral energy *can* sleep under the Gospel, as *we receive it*. How can he rest while a world is heaving with its throes of anguish, and hell fast filling with its monuments of death?

Under this system there is no place, no permission, to stop or relax exertion for the instruction, improvement, and salvation of an entire world. Yea, there can be no desire to stop while one distant soul is ignorant of Christ. There is no room for restless caviling, nor stupid unconcern. It is enough to command an angel's mind in the wisdom of its arrangement; enough to arouse the dead in the tremendous nature of its issues.

Then let us "contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints."

THIRDLY, In conclusion, I would allude briefly to the manner in which we should met the injunction of the text.

This implies no violence, no crusades, no denunciation, no weapons of a carnal warfare. It demands no heated passion; no exclusive partisanship; no violence of the social courtesies and sympathies of life; no invasion of the privileges of private opinion and free discussion; nothing of that distance, reserve and haughty carriage that so often mark the footsteps of ecclesiastical domination, and pride of assumed prerogatives and abused power. Nothing of this should illustrate the deep attachment

of the Christian to the faith of his choice, or his defence of its invaded and invaluable principles.

1. *We should "contend for the faith" by cherishing for it an open and decided attachment.* Give it its claims upon your heart and your high regard in all your preaching. Let it be known that you love it as the security of your hopes, the ground of your usefulness, the honor of your Saviour. Bind it upon your hearts as the legacy of his love, the charter of his kingdom, and the pledge of your allegiance.

2. *Let this affectionate interest be an enlightened attachment.* The mind of every Christian should be imbued with these lessons of truth. He should ever be ready to give a reason for the hope that is in him, and light should radiate from him as from a star.

3. *This faith should be early and prayerfully inculcated in family discipline.* It should be incorporated with the discipline of every household, form the thoughts and aspirations of the opening mind, and become the exhaustless storehouse for earliest initiation and perpetual research. These truths excluded from the family, from the Sabbath School, and from the religious reading for the young, and ignorance, licentiousness, and death, will derange and debase their riper years and close their eternal destiny.

4. *We should secure and sustain those sacred institutions which this faith enjoins*, and ever be ready *to make sacrifices for its advancement and the security of its purposes.* Its preaching, its ordinances, its recurring services, are not only its symbols, but its securities. And the grand end of this faith secured, is the proof of its transcendent excellence. One revival of religion, scriptural and pure, becomes the divine sanction of the faith that attends it, which neither scepticism nor sin can resist, while its subjects, loving the doctrines and duties inculcated at this eventful crisis of the soul's history, become the living epistles of their purity and value, the monuments we rear to the glory of God, the defence and honor of "*the faith delivered to the saints.*"

5. *We should contend for this faith by affectionate reliance upon God, and fervent wrestling for the spirit that gave it;* for that which makes it the fire and the hammer that breaketh the rock—the arrow of the Almighty—the wisdom and the power of God unto salvation.

Finally, We should contend for the faith by a practical illustration of its *charity*—the *diffusing spirit and untiring energy of its benevolence.*

The spirit, the life of our faith is charity. Practical piety is its brightest sanction; its holy and efficient commendation, "See how these Christians love one another," carried conviction to the heart. And as they love the world, and are alive to its wants, there rises proof of their piety and the power of their faith.

This faith is not to live and spread by the force of controversy, yet thousands are won to truth and to God by the labors of love. And in this age of independent thought, there is no hope from

the array of ecclesiastical prerogatives nor from church excisions. There is no saving mercy in spiritual domination, nor in official investitures. These multiply no converts to Christ, while crowds of redeemed from error and death rise from the excellent knowledge, the tenderness of forbearance and the persuasions of love.

The cry of heresy; the charge of undefined error; the lifted arm; the terror of execution! Is this the way to promote the Christian faith? Is this the charity it breathes? In this age of thought, reflection, of argument and advance, errors of philosophy, of speculation, of creeds even, are not corrected by the asperities of controversy, nor by the charges and dogmas issuing from the schools or the chairs of tutorage. School against school, office against office, church against church, is not the heavenly-directed way to advance the truth and save the world.

But let the ministry of the church be enlisted in the exalted enterprise of charity; pressing onward to convert the world by the truth uncorrupted, radiant in the light of celestial love; and there is no time, no desire to waste their energies in useless contest. That great cause, the world's salvation, so absorbing; its issues so eventful and glorious, all inferior objects are lost in its commanding claims—forever lost in the magnificence of its triumphs.

My brethren, we have here in "*the faith*" an ample remedy for every evil resting on mankind. In the power of its truth and charity God confides his cause, the infinite purchase of his grace. And it appeals with special interest to *us*. We profess to be among those whose stern adherence to truth rises superior to all considerations of office and church prescription, and order, and forms. We derive from the truth of God, his power divine, not from official endowments and personal investments. We receive from no human succession the hope and grace of God, but direct from his truth and that eternal Spirit that giveth life. As much as we prize our ecclesiastical order and our forms of scriptural simplicity, we ascribe to them no exclusive efficacy, but ever hold them subservient to the higher ends of truth. Everything else we sacrifice to this; without which, everything of order, of forms, of ordinances, of office, of succession, and endowments, is worthless and vain, but with which, religion will live and triumph, and bring to ultimate and heavenly order the entire church of renovated men.

It is not strange, then, that *we* should have stable confidence, amid all the perils that surround us, just in proportion as we value, and harmonize in, and are determined at all hazards to maintain and advance the *truth as it is in Jesus*. Nor is it strange that we should look with jealousy and dread upon every invasion of the essential elements of the faith, by whomsoever made, or under whatsoever pretensions. There is no wisdom nor charity in obscuring or compromising one essential truth for any end that heaven or earth can name. It should not be overlooked

that both mistaken charity and sectarian policy may unite their influence to obscure the truth, and perhaps there has been no time more favorable than the present for this sad result. Mind is no longer isolated and solitary in its investigations; no one wanders in error alone. Men now act in masses, and move forward under the instruction and guidance of schools. One mind gives form and energy to thousands; and when wrongly directed the peril is immense, as by the frost of a single night the rich harvest of a whole year and entire country are cut down. Minds thus moving as in constellations, if in conflict, it is like the concussion of systems. Error thus diffused, and yet consolidated and fortified, becomes doubly formidable, and demands as formidable, concentrated, and harmonious action to meet and control it. And where can we unite on ground so sacred and safe as on the ground of truth? And for what other ends on earth can we here divide?

I can not but fear, that, from the imperfections of men, the history of seminaries and universities, and even from laudable desire for Christian union in benevolent efforts, if not from the actual state of the pulpit and the press at this hour, rigid truth, in its high evangelical character, may suffer wrong and be eclipsed.

Resting upon this faith, and upon nothing else, the charter of our church and the basis of our hopes, if this is corrupted or obscured, we, as a distinctive body, are gone; and turning aside for the advancement of other interests than this, we are lost as to the high destiny of our mission. Yea, seeking to cure the evils of the world without this, or in advance of this, we are sure of defeat and of infinite loss.

We are indeed nearing a fearful crisis; the world is in serious conflict, in restless, violent, and convulsive action. All is impatience, uncertainty, and fear. The wisest and the best are in doubt, and hesitate; and I rejoice that it is so. I believe the time has come when God will confound the wisdom of the wise, check the presumption of arrogance, and spiritual boasting, and fanatical zeal, and give a new and brilliant sanction to truth and grace by Jesus Christ. The frameworks reared around the faith must be laid aside, human device be abandoned, and the pure gospel have its course, run and be glorified. Truth the weapon of our warfare, and grace the ground of our hopes, doubts in the policy of our plans will end. God shall open springs in the desert; more than the pillar of cloud and of fire shall guide our way, and more than Canaan spread her rich and radiant fields, our home, our rest, and full reward.

Let the spirit of the Gospel be diffused abroad, Christ crucified be preached, obeyed, and loved, evils appalling shall die away; life from the dead and liberty in God shall reign; as by enchantment, the conflicting elements of the world shall rest; the songs of the jubilee break upon every ear; the charity of truth, righteousness, and Christ, adorn and bless the entire race of fallen man.

SERMON CCCCXXVI.

BY THE REV. G. A. LINTNER, D. D.

PASTOR OF THE EVAN. LUTHERAN CHURCH AT SCHOHARIE, N. Y.

THE DUTY OF CHRISTIANS TO ASSEMBLE FOR PRAYER.

For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.—MATTHEW xviii. 20.

CHRIST is here speaking of prayer, and of meeting for this purpose. In the preceding verse he says, that if only two of his disciples shall agree to ask anything of his Heavenly Father, it shall be given them. He shows the power and efficacy of united prayer. In the text he expresses the same sentiment, only in much stronger terms; he tells us, that where two or three are assembled in his name, he will be present. The presence of Christ with his people is always to be regarded by them as a great blessing, but more especially in prayer; he is there present, not merely to comfort their hearts with the tokens of his love, as their precious Redeemer, but to hear and answer prayer.

Christ meets his people at the mercy seat with *peculiar manifestations* of his presence. He reveals himself as the mighty deliverer, who is able to save to the uttermost every one that cometh to God through him, as the great Intercessor and prevailing Advocate with the Father, who presents the prayers of his people at the throne of heavenly grace, and is able to procure for them every needed blessing.

The language of Christ in the text is very expressive. It teaches that it is the *duty of Christians to meet for prayer*, and holds out a precious promise as an encouragement to this duty. Christ gives us to understand in these words, that there is something peculiar in united prayer, something that can not be experienced and realized when we are alone. He does not say that he will not hear us when we call upon him alone in our closets, or at the family altar; but he teaches us that we ought to meet to mingle our prayers at the throne of grace, and that when we thus meet, our prayers will be more effectual than when we call upon his name separately and alone. This is clearly the doctrine of the text, and this doctrine I shall endeavor to illustrate and to establish by several considerations to which I propose to call your further attention.

1. God is ever ready to hear the prayers of his people, when they approach him with the *right spirit*. It matters not in what place or under what circumstances we draw near to God—whether in public or in private, in our closet or in the congregation—if we lift up our *hearts* to God, he will hear our prayer. But still God is desirous that his peo-

ple should unite in this service; that they should come together and agree in what they shall ask, and then go with one accord to the throne of grace and offer the united petitions, that God may grant them the things for which they have agreed to ask.

With such prayer, coming up from united hearts,—hearts drawn out before God with a deep feeling of their common wants, and mutual dependance on God, and bound together by the ties of Christian affection and holy sympathy,—with prayer proceeding from such hearts God is particularly pleased. And when his people pray in this way, when they meet and lift up their hearts together, God is more ready to hear prayer, than when they remain separate and present their petitions individually. When Christians agree as touching anything they shall ask, when they go together to the throne of grace, when they enter into the presence of God with united hearts, and ask in the name of Christ, the Great Mediator, it shall be given them. And Christ has promised that he will be present in such meetings, to encourage the hearts of his people, receive their petitions, and render their prayers effectual.

These are great encouragements and precious promises, which should induce us frequently to meet for prayer. The Lord can do great things for his people. He can build up the waste places, and turn the desolate wilderness into a beautiful field, and make it like the garden of Eden; but for these things he will be "inquired of by the house of Israel" to do it for them. He will have the prayers of his people: it is his will that they should assemble themselves for this purpose, that they should come together, and ask him to do these things for them.

Accordingly, we find that when the servants of God felt that they needed the help of the Almighty, or when there was some particular object in which they were deeply interested, and lay heavily upon their hearts, they *met to pray*. When the Jews found that they were ready to perish under the decree of Ahasuerus the king, who condemned them to death, they met to fast and pray. They cried unto the Lord, and the Lord heard their cry, and sent them deliverance. When the disciples of Christ, at Damascus, were in danger of being destroyed by the persecution of Saul, who breathed out threatnings and slaughter against them, they assembled to pray; and God, in answer to their united supplications, stopped the bloody persecutor on his way, and delivered them out of his hands. When Peter was in prison, suffering persecution and exposed to martyrdom, his brethren met to pray; and while they were yet praying, the doors of the prison were thrown open, and the angel of the Lord led him forth and delivered him out of the hands of his persecutors. When the disciples of our Lord were left by their Divine Master in a world filled with the enemies of the cross, who rose up against them on every side, and threatened to destroy them, they were gathered together to pray; and the Holy Spirit came down, and the power of God was manifested in changing the enemies and persecutors of the Christian religion into friends.

Thus we see how the servants of the Lord, of every age, have been

drawn together by the spirit of prayer; how they cried unto the Lord in their distress, and how God heard their *united* cry, and sent them deliverance. This shows that God has a peculiar regard to the supplications of his people, when they meet together to pray. It shows also the great importance of such meetings, and the many advantages that Christians might derive from them if they would more frequently attend them.

We do not mean to assert that these meetings are more important than some other means of grace which Christians ought to use; we do not say that prayer-meetings should ever take the place of the regular worship of the sanctuary, or that the Christian duty of attending these meetings should ever interfere with any other Christian duty; but we do mean to say, that Christians should never *satisfy* themselves with worshiping God, or hearing the gospel preached once or twice on the Sabbath, and neglect the prayer meeting.

In every Christian church, the gospel should not only be regularly preached, and faithfully heard on the Sabbath, but the people should meet to pray, either on the Sabbath, or during the week, as may be most convenient for them. It is the solemn duty of every church to see that such meetings are established and sustained. And when such meetings are established, it is the *Christian duty* of every member of the Church to attend them, for his own edification and for the good of others. A church whose prayer-meetings are neglected can not prosper. A congregation that meets only once a week on the Sabbath to hear the gospel preached, and does not come together to pray, will soon become cold, and formal, and dead. Such a church need not expect much success on the labors of its minister; it need not look for the conversion of sinners, for revivals of religion; for how can it be expected that God will bestow such blessings, when the people do not ask for them, when they feel no interest in these things, and when they show by their conduct that they live prayerless, and unconcerned for the spiritual prosperity of Zion? Go into a church or among a people where prayer-meetings are neglected, where scarcely one out of twenty ever attend them, and where even some of the leading members stay away for some trifling excuse, and what will you see? You will see no awakening among sinners, no stir among professing Christians, no movement in the valley of dry bones; a dark and dismal gloom, like the gloom of death itself, has settled upon the church, and you hear nothing but complaints about the low state of religion; and this complaint is sometimes uttered by the very persons who never go near the prayer-meeting, and who, by their careless and manifest neglect of Christian duties, have occasioned the very state of things of which they complain. It would be strange indeed if such a church could be blessed. It would be presumptuous even to hope that God would visit such a people with the refreshing influences of the Holy Spirit, while they continue in this state.

And what must become of the members who thus neglect their duty to the church and their own souls? Can they expect to be saved? Do they enjoy religion in their hearts? Have they any evidence that

ple should unite in this service; that they should come together and agree in what they shall ask, and then go with one accord to the throne of grace and offer the united petitions, that God may grant them the things for which they have agreed to ask.

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they have an interest in Christ, and a share in his salvation? What is their state? What is the state of their hearts? They have professed Christ and his religion, but they have no love for his church, no attachment to its members. They do not meet with them to pray; they have no communion with Christ, nor fellowship with his members. And now I ask those members who care nothing for the prayer-meeting, and have so little love and regard for those who do attend them,—for there are some such members in every church, and I mean to come directly to them with this subject, and I hope that God may send the truth to their hearts, and make them feel it,—I ask the members of the church who do not attend the prayer-meeting, What is the state of your heart? I will not undertake to judge you; God knows your heart; but I can imagine how you feel. I judge from your conduct you feel uneasy, discontented, unhappy, and dissatisfied with the brethren; you feel as though there was no sympathy for you in the church; no love and regard manifested by its members; as though you were shut out from all communion and fellowship, and had no disposition to meet and associate with them. Now this is a wretched feeling; and this feeling you have, because you *will cherish* it in your hearts, when you ought to try and get rid of it, and might be soon free from it if you would only do your duty. You have neglected your duty. How long is it since you have attended the prayer-meeting? since you have met with your brethren of the church at the mercy seat, and kneeled down before a throne of grace, and united with them in supplication before God? Perhaps never. And if you have done so, it may be months and years since you have performed this duty. And now, is it to be wondered at that you carry about with you a most wretched feeling in your heart—a feeling of jealousy, and distrust, and even ill towards your brethren, and have no disposition to meet and pray with them? Come to the prayer-meeting, and open your heart to the influences of the meeting, and try to enter into its spirit, and you will soon lose this feeling. I know of no better remedy for all the bad feelings that enter into the heart of the Christian, than to go to a prayer-meeting. Many have found it to be a most effectual cure, and I am sure that you will find it to be so, if you only will take the remedy and apply it faithfully to yourself.

We read of an incident that occurred during the ministry of Christ on the earth, which affords a very beautiful and striking illustration of this subject. The Saviour would frequently retire by himself and pray alone. He spent whole nights in this exercise. But on one occasion he took Peter, and James, and John, and went into a mountain, and there, attended by his beloved disciples, he poured out his soul in fervent supplication before God. And while he was praying, the glory of the Lord was revealed; a light shone from heaven, and the Saviour's face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light; and Moses and Elias, two glorified spirits, came down from heaven to hold communion with the worshipers of God on the earth; and such were the feelings and emotions occasioned by this communion of kindred spirits, that Peter exclaimed, "Lord,

it is good for us to be here." O, it is good to meet with Christ and his people, to draw nigh to God in prayer, when Christ himself is present to reveal himself to us, and give us manifestations of his glory. Every Christian who has been blessed in the prayer-meeting, has experienced this. And O, how little do they know of the comforts of religion, who have no relish for such enjoyments, no wish, no desire to go where Jesus meets his disciples with the tokens of his love and goodness! O, what are the pleasures of sin, the poor gratifications of this world, when compared with such delightful seasons of refreshing from the presence of God!

And now, let me appeal to Christians who formerly attended the prayer-meeting, but have now forsaken and no longer feel any interest in them,—Have you not been profited by these meetings? Have not your souls been blessed? Have you not realized the presence of the Saviour, and experienced the fulfillment of his promise? Have you not often felt that it was good for you to be there, and pour out your heart in praises and thanksgivings to God for the comfort and gratification he afforded you? How interesting and delightful were these seasons you spent in prayer with your beloved brethren, the servants of God, around you, participating in your feelings, and sharing with you the sweet comfort and peace, which the presence of the Saviour produced in your midst! And have you so soon forgotten these precious seasons of spiritual enjoyment, when your hearts were filled with love to God and the brethren, and you could experience no greater delight than to unite with them in the service of God? And are you not denying yourselves a great privilege? Are you not injuring your own souls by staying away from the prayer-meeting? Do you not know that your are losing your interest in religion; that grace is diminishing in your hearts; that you are growing more careless, and becoming weaker and weaker every day? And is there no danger in your case that the Holy Spirit will finally leave you, and that God will give you up to perish in the cold and wretched state in which you are now living?

Dear brethren, let me entreat you, by all that is sacred, by the regard you have for your own souls, and the love and compassion of your Redeemer, to consider your state. You have wandered from the fold of Christ; you have gone out of the way. And now let me urge you to return;—return to the places you have vacated in the prayer-meeting; return to your former standing in the church; return to your duty, and comfort and joy will return to your heart.

And, finally, I would appeal to those who never attend the prayer-meeting. There are some such, always ready to go where there is preaching, but never go near a prayer-meeting. Have you considered the words of Christ, "Where two or three are gathered," &c.? What do you think of these words? Are they true? Do you believe these words of Christ? Then he is at every prayer-meeting of his true disciples, small as it may be. If it consists of only two or three, Christ is there; the precious Saviour is there; the Saviour who shed his blood on the cross; the Great Redeemer is there; the glorious

King of Zion is there, displaying the riches of his power and grace to his people. And will you not go to such a meeting—a meeting where Christ himself is present to receive his people, with all that love and affection which he manifested when he gave himself for them, and where he would be willing to receive you, if you only would go and give up your hearts to him? O, sinner, you know not how much you *lose*, when you lose the benefit of a prayer-meeting. You need prayer, you need the Saviour; and you ought to go to the Saviour, and be thankful for every opportunity to meet with those who are willing to pray for you.

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HARTFORD, CONN.

UNCONSCIOUS INFLUENCE.

Then went in also that other disciple.—John xx. 8.

In this slight touch or turn of history, is opened to us, if we scan it closely, one of the most serious and fruitful chapters of Christian doctrine. Thus it is that men are ever touching unconsciously the springs of motion in each other; thus it is that one man, without thought or intention, or even a consciousness of the fact, is ever leading some other after him. Little does Peter think, as he comes up where his doubting brother is looking into the sepulchre, and goes straight in, after his peculiar manner, that he is drawing in his brother apostle after him. As little does John think, when he loses his misgivings, and goes into the sepulchre after Peter, that he is following his brother. And just so, unawares to himself, is every man, the whole race through, laying hold of his fellow-man, to lead him where otherwise he would not go. We overrun the boundaries of our personality—we flow together. A Peter leads a John, a John goes after a Peter, both of them unconscious of any influence exerted or received. And thus our life and conduct are ever propagating themselves, by a law of social contagion, throughout the circles and times in which we live.

There are, then, you will perceive, two sorts of influence belonging to man; that which is active or voluntary, and that which is unconscious;—that which we exert purposely, or in the endeavor to sway another, as by teaching, by argument, by persuasion, by threatenings, by offers and promises,—and that which flows out from us unawares to ourselves, the same which Peter had over John when he led him into the sepulchre. The importance of our efforts to do good, that is of our voluntary influence, and the sacred obligation we are under to exert ourselves in this way, are often and seriously insisted on. It is thus that Christianity has become, in the present age, a principle of so much greater activity than it has been for many centuries before; and we fervently hope, that it will yet become far more active than it now is, nor cease to multiply its industry, till it is seen by all mankind to embody the beneficence and the living energy of Christ himself.

But there needs to be produced, at the same time, and partly for this object, a more thorough appreciation of the relative im-

portance of that kind of influence or beneficence which is insensibly exerted. The tremendous weight and efficacy of this, compared with the other, and the sacred responsibility laid upon us in regard to this, are felt in no such degree or proportion as they should be; and the consequent loss we suffer in character, as well as that which the Church suffers in beauty and strength, is incalculable. The more stress, too, needs to be laid on this subject of insensible influence, because it is insensible; because it is out of mind, and, when we seek to trace it, beyond a full discovery.

If the doubt occur to any of you, in the announcement of this subject, whether we are properly responsible for an influence which we exert insensibly; we are not, I reply, except so far as this influence flows directly from our character and conduct. And this it does, even much more uniformly than our active influence. In the latter we may fail of our end by a want of wisdom or skill; in which case we are still as meritorious, in God's sight, as if we succeeded. So, again, we may really succeed, and do great good by our active endeavors, from motives altogether base and hypocritical, in which case we are as evil, in God's sight, as if we had failed. But the influences we exert unconsciously will almost never disagree with our real character. They are honest influences, following our character, as the shadow follows the sun. And, therefore, we are much more certainly responsible for them, and their effects on the world. They go streaming from us in all directions, though in channels that we do not see, poisoning or healing around the roots of society, and among the hidden wells of character. If good ourselves, they are good; if bad, they are bad. And, since they reflect so exactly our character, it is impossible to doubt our responsibility for their effects on the world. We must answer not only for what we do with a purpose, but for the influence we exert insensibly. To give you any just impressions of the breadth and seriousness of such a reckoning I know to be impossible. No mind can trace it. But it will be something gained if I am able to awaken only a suspicion of the vast extent and moment of those influences, which are ever flowing out unbidden upon society, from your life and character.

In the prosecution of my design, let me ask of you, first of all, to expel the common prejudice that there can be nothing of consequence in unconscious influences, because they make no report, and fall on the world unobserved. Histories and biographies make little account of the power men exert insensibly over each other. They tell how men have led armies, established empires, enacted laws, gained causes, sung, reasoned and taught;—always occupied in setting forth what they do with a purpose. But what they do without a purpose, the streams of influence that flow out from their persons unbidden on the world, they cannot trace or compute, and seldom even mention. So also the public laws make men responsible only for what they do with a positive purpose, and take no account of the mischiefs or benefits that are communicated by their noxious or healthful example. The same is true

in the discipline of families, churches, and schools; they make no account of the things we do, except we will them. What we do insensibly passes for nothing, because no human government can trace such influences with sufficient certainty to make their authors responsible.

But you must not conclude that influences of this kind are insignificant, because they are unnoticed and noiseless. How is it in the natural world? Behind the mere show, the outward noise and stir of the world, nature always conceals her hand of control, and the laws by which she rules. Who ever saw with the eye, for example, or heard with the ear, the exertions of that tremendous astronomic force, which every moment holds the compact of the physical universe together? The lightning is, in fact, but a mere fire-fly spark in comparison; but because it glares on the clouds, and thunders so terribly in the ear, and rives the tree or the rock where it falls, many will be ready to think that it is a vastly more potent agent than gravity.

The Bible calls the good man's life a light, and it is the nature of light to flow out spontaneously in all directions, and fill the world unconsciously with its beams. So the Christian shines, it would say, not so much because he will, as because he is a luminous object. Not that the active influence of Christians is made of no account in the figure, but only that this symbol of light has its property, in the fact that their unconscious influence is the chief influence, and has the precedence in its power over the world. And yet there are many, who will be ready to think that light is a very tame and feeble instrument, because it is noiseless. An earthquake, for example, is to them a much more vigorous and effective agency. Hear how it comes thundering through the solid foundations of nature. It rocks a whole continent. The noblest works of man, cities, monuments, and temples, are in a moment levelled to the ground, or swallowed down the opening gulfs of fire. Little do they think that the light of every morning, the soft, and genial, and silent light, is an agent many times more powerful. But let the light of the morning cease and return no more, let the hour of morning come, and bring with it no dawn: the outcries of a horror-stricken world fill the air, and make, as it were, the darkness audible. The beasts go wild and frantic at the loss of the sun. The vegetable growths turn pale and die. A chill creeps on, and frosty winds begin to howl across the freezing earth. Colder, and yet colder, is the night. The vital blood, at length, of all creatures, stops congealed. Down goes the frost towards the earth's centre. The heart of the sea is frozen, nay the earthquakes are themselves frozen in, under their fiery caverns. The very globe itself too, and all the fellow planets that have lost their sun, are become mere balls of ice, swinging silent in the darkness. Such is the light, which revisits us in the silence of the morning. It makes no shock or scar. It would not wake an infant in his cradle. And yet it perpetually new creates the world, rescuing it, each morning, as a prey from night and chaos.

So the Christian is a light, even "the light of the world," and we must not think that because he shines insensibly or silently, as a mere luminous object, he is therefore powerless. The greatest powers are ever those which lie back of the little stirs and commotions of nature; and I verily believe, that the insensible influences of good men are as much more potent than what I have called their voluntary or active, as the great silent powers of nature are of greater consequence than her little disturbances and tumults. The law of human influence is deeper than many suspect, and they lose sight of it altogether. The outward endeavors made by good men or bad to sway others, they call their influence; whereas it is, in fact, but a fraction, and in most cases, but a very small fraction, of the good or evil that flows out of their lives. Nay, I will even go farther. How many persons do you meet, the insensible influence of whose manners and character is so decided, as often to thwart their voluntary influence; so that whatever they attempt to do, in the way of controlling others, they are sure to carry the exact opposite of what they intend! And it will generally be found, that, where men undertake by argument or persuasion to exert a power, in the face of qualities that make them odious or detestable, or only not entitled to respect, their insensible influence will be too strong for them. In all such cases, the voluntary influence of men will not even compose a fraction, however small, of what they do.

I call your attention, next, to the twofold powers of effect and expression by which man connects with his fellow man. If we distinguish man as a creature of language, and thus qualified to communicate himself to others, there are in him two sets or kinds of language; one which is voluntary in the use, and one that is involuntary—that of speech in the literal sense; and that expression of the eye, the face, the look, the gait, the motion, the tone or cadence, which is sometimes called the natural language of the sentiments. This natural language, too, is greatly enlarged by the conduct of life, that which, in business and society, reveals the principles and spirit of men. Speech, or voluntary language, is a door to the soul that we may open or shut at will; the other is a door that stands open evermore, and reveals to others constantly, and often very clearly, the tempers, tastes, and wishes of their hearts. Within, as we may represent, this character, charging the common reservoir of influence, and through these twofold gates of the soul, pouring itself out on the world. Out of one it flows at choice, and whensoever we purpose to do good or evil to men. Out of the other it flows each moment, as light from the sun, and propagates itself in all beholders.

Then if we go over to others, that is, to the subjects of influence, we find every man endowed with two inlets of impression; the ear and the understanding for the reception of speech, and the sympathetic powers, the sensibilities or affections, for tinder to those sparks of emotion revealed by looks, tones, manners and general conduct. And these sympathetic powers, though not im-

mediately rational, are yet inlets, open on all sides, to the understanding and character. They have a certain wonderful capacity to receive impressions, and catch the meaning of signs, and propagate in us whatsoever falls into their passive moulds from others. The impressions they receive do not come through verbal propositions, and are never received into verbal proposition, it may be, in the mind, and therefore many think nothing of them. But precisely on this account are they the more powerful, because it is as if one heart were thus going directly into another, and carrying in its feelings with it. Beholding, as in a glass, the feelings of our neighbor, we are changed into the same image, by the assimilating power of sensibility and fellow-feeling. Many have gone so far, and not without show, at least, of reason, as to maintain that the look or expression, and even the very features of children, are often changed, by exclusive intercourse with nurses and attendants. Furthermore, if we carefully consider we shall find it scarcely possible to doubt, that simply to look on bad and malignant faces, or those whose expressions have become infected by vice, to be with them and become familarized to them, is enough permanently to affect the character of persons of mature age. I do not say that it must of necessity subvert their character, for the evil looked upon may never be loved or welcomed in practice; but it is something to have these bad images in the soul, giving out their expressions there, and diffusing their odour among the thoughts as long as we live. How dangerous a thing is it, for example, for a man to become accustomed to sights of cruelty! What man, valueing the honor of his soul, would not shrink from yielding himself to such an influence? No more is it a thing of indifference to become accustomed to look on the manners, and receive the guilty expression of any kind of sin.

The door of involuntary communication, I have said, is always open. Of course we are communicating ourselves in this way to others at every moment of our intercourse or presence with them. But how very seldom, in comparison, do we undertake by means of speech to influence others! Even the best Christian, one who most improves his opportunities to do good, attempts but seldom to sway another by voluntary influence, whereas he is all the while shining as a luminous object unawares, and communicating of his heart to the world.

But there is yet another view of this double line of communication which man has with his fellow-men, which is more general, and displays the import of the truth yet more convincingly. It is by one of these modes of communication that we are constituted members of voluntary society, and by the other, parts of a general mass or members of involuntary society. You are all, in a certain view, individuals, and separate as persons from each other: you are also, in a certain other view, parts of a common body, as truly as the parts of a stone. Thus if you ask how it is that you and all men came without your consent to exist in society, to be within its power, to be under its laws, the answer is, that while

you are a man, you are also a fractional element of a larger and more comprehensive being, called society—be it the family, the church, the state. In a certain department of your nature, it is open; its sympathies and feelings are open. On this open side you all adhere together, as parts of a larger nature, in which there is a common circulation of want, impulse, and law. Being thus made common to each other voluntarily, you become one mass, one consolidated social body, animated by one life. And observe how far this involuntary communication and sympathy between the members of a state or family is sovereign over their character. It always results in what men call the national or family spirit; for there is a spirit peculiar to every state and family in the world. Sometimes, too, this national or family spirit takes a religious or an irreligious character, and appears almost to absorb the religious self-government of an individual. What was the national spirit of France, for example, at a certain time, but a spirit of infidelity? What is the religious spirit of Spain at this moment, but a spirit of bigotry, quite as wide of Christianity and destructive to character as the spirit of falsehood? What is the family spirit in many a house, but the spirit of gain, or pleasure, or appetite, in which everything that is warm, dignified, genial, and good in religion is visibly absent? Sometimes you will almost fancy that you see the shapes of money in the eyes of the children. So it is that we are led on by nations, as it were, to a good or bad immortality. Far down in the secret foundations of life and society, there lie concealed great laws and channels of influence, which make the race common to each other in all the main departments or divisions of the social mass—laws which often escape our notice altogether, but which are to society as gravity to the general system of God's works.

But these are general considerations, and more fit, perhaps, to give you a rational conception of the modes of influence and their relative power, than to verify that conception, or establish its truth. I now proceed to add, therefore, some miscellaneous proofs of a more particular nature.

And I mention, first of all, the instinct of imitation in children. We begin our mortal experience, not with acts grounded in judgment or reason, or with ideas received through language, but by simple imitation, and, under the guidance of this, we lay our foundations. The child looks and listens, and whatsoever tone of feeling or manner of conduct is displayed around him, sinks into his plastic, passive soul, and becomes a mould of his being ever after. The very handling of the nursery is significant, and the petulance, the passion, the gentleness, the tranquillity indicated by it, are all reproduced in the child. His soul is a purely receptive nature, and that, for a considerable period, without choice or selection. A little further on, he begins voluntarily to copy everything he sees. Voice, manner, gait, everything which the eye sees, the mimic instinct delights to act over. And thus we have a whole generation of future men, receiving from us their very beginnings, and the deepest impulses of their life and immortality. They watch us

every moment, in the family, before the hearth, and at the table; and when we are meaning them no good or evil, when we are conscious of exerting no influence over them, they are drawing from us impressions and moulds of habit, which, if wrong, no patience or discipline can wholly remove; or if right, no future exposure utterly dissipate. Now it may be doubted, I think, whether, in all the active influence of our lives, we do as much to shape the destiny of our fellow-men, as we do in this single article of unconscious influence over children.

Still further on, respect for others takes the place of imitation. We naturally desire the approbation or good opinion of others. You see the strength of this feeling in the article of fashion. How few persons have the nerve to resist a fashion! We have fashions, too, in literature, and in worship, and in moral and religious doctrine, almost equally powerful. How many will violate the best rules of society, because it is the practice of their circle! How many reject Christ because of friends or acquaintance, who have no suspicion of the influence they exert, and will not have, till the last day shows them what they have done! Every good man has thus a power in his person, more mighty than his words and arguments, and which others feel when he little suspects it. Every bad man too has a fund of poison in his character, which is tainting those around him, when it is not in his thoughts to do them an injury. He is read and understood. His sensual tastes and habits, his unbelieving spirit, his suppressed leer at religion, have all a power, and take hold of the hearts of others, whether he will have it so or not.

Again, how well understood is it, that the most active feelings and impulses of mankind are contagious! How quick enthusiasm of any sort is to kindle, and how rapidly it catches from one to another, till a nation blazes in the flame! In the case of the crusades you have an example, where the personal enthusiasm of one man put all the states of Europe in motion. Fanaticism is almost equally contagious. Fear and superstition always infect the mind of the circle in which they are manifested. The spirit of war generally becomes an epidemic of madness, when once it has got possession of a few minds. The spirit of party is propagated in a similar manner. How any slight operation in the market may spread, like a fire, if successful, till trade runs wild in a general infatuation, is well known. Now, in all these examples, the effect is produced, not by active endeavor to carry influence, but mostly by that insensible propagation which follows, when a flame of any kind is once kindled.

Is it also true, you may ask, that the religious spirit propagates itself or tends to propagate itself in the same way? I see no reason to question that it does. Nor does anything in the doctrine of spiritual influences, when rightly understood, forbid the supposition. For spiritual influences are never separated from the laws of thought in the individual, and the laws of feeling and influence in society. If, too, every disciple is to be an "epistle known and

read of all men," what shall we expect, but that all men will be some how affected by the reading? Or, if he is to be a light in the world, what shall we look for, but that others seeing his good works, shall glorify God on his account? How often is it seen too as a fact of observation, that one, or a few good men, kindle at length a holy fire in the community in which they live, and become the leaven of a general reformation! Such men give a more vivid proof in their persons of the reality of religious faith, than any words or arguments could yield. They are active; they endeavor, of course, to exert a good voluntary influence; but still their chief power lies in their holiness, and the sense they produce in others of their close relation to God.

It now remains to exhibit the very important fact, that where the direct or active influence of men is supposed to be great, even this is due, in a principal degree, to that insensible influence by which their arguments, reproofs, and persuasions are secretly invigorated. It is not mere words which turn men; it is the heart mounting uncalled into the expression of the features; it is the eye illuminated by reason, the look beaming with goodness; it is the tone of the voice, that instrument of the soul, which changes quality with such amazing facility, and gives out in the soft, the tender, the tremulous, the firm, every shade of emotion and character. And so much is there in this, that the moral stature and character of the man that speaks, are likely to be well represented in his manner. If he is a stranger, his way will inspire confidence and attract good will. His virtues will be seen as it were gathering round him to minister words and forms of thought, and their voices will be heard in the fall of his cadences. And the same is true of bad men, or men who have nothing in their character corresponding to what they attempt to do. If without heart or interest you attempt to move another, the involuntary man tells what you are doing, in a hundred ways at once. A hypocrite endeavoring to exert a good influence, only tries to convey by words what the lying look, and the faithless affectation, or dry exaggeration of his manner, perpetually resists. We have it for a fashion to attribute great or even prodigious results to the voluntary efforts and labors of men. Whatever they effect, is commonly referred to nothing but the immediate power of what they do. Let us take an example, like that of Paul, and analyze it. Paul was a man of great fervor and enthusiasm. He combined, withal, more of what is lofty and morally commanding in his character than most of the very distinguished men of the world. Having this for his natural character, and his natural character exalted and made luminous by Christian faith, and the manifest indwelling of God, he had of course an almost superhuman sway over others. Doubtless he was intelligent, strong in argument, eloquent, active, to the utmost of his powers, but still he moved the world more by what he was than by what he did. The grandeur and spiritual splendor of his character were ever adding to his active efforts an element of silent power, which was the real and chief cause of their efficacy. He

convinced, subdued, inspired, and led, because of the half divine authority which appeared in his conduct and his glowing spirit. He "fought the good fight," because he "kept the faith," and filled his powerful nature with influences drawn from higher worlds.

And here I must conduct you to a yet higher example, even that of the Son of God, "the light of the world." Men dislike to be swayed by direct, voluntary influence. They are jealous of such control, and are therefore best approached by conduct and feeling, and the authority of simple worth, which seem to make no purposed onset. If goodness appears, they welcome its celestial smile; if heaven descends to encircle them, they yield to its sweetness; if truth appears in the life, they honor it with a secret homage; if personal majesty and glory appear, they bow with reverence, and acknowledge with shame their own vileness. Now it is on this side of human nature that Christ visits us, preparing just that kind of influence which the spirit of truth may wield with the most persuasive and subduing effect. It is the grandeur of His character which constitutes the chief power of His ministry, not his miracles or teachings apart from His character. Miracles were useful, at the time, to arrest attention, and His doctrine is useful at all times as the highest revelation of truth possible in speech; but the greatest truth of the gospel, notwithstanding, is Christ himself—a human body become the organ of the divine nature, and revealing, under the conditions of an earthly life, the glory of God! The Scripture writers have much to say, in this connexion, of the *image* of God: and an image, you know, is that which simply represents, not that which acts, or reasons, or persuades. Now it is this image of God which makes the centre, the sun itself of the gospel. The journeyings, teachings, miracles, and sufferings of Christ, all had their use in bringing out this image, or what is the same, in making conspicuous the character and feelings of God, both towards sinners and towards sin. And here is the power of Christ—it is what of God's beauty, love, truth, and justice shines through him. It is the influence which flows unconsciously and spontaneously out of Christ, as the friend of man, "the light of the world," "the glory of the Father," made visible. And some have gone so far as to conjecture, that God made the human person originally, with a view to its becoming the organ or vehicle by which He might reveal His communicable attributes to other worlds. Christ, they believe, came to inhabit this organ, that he might execute a purpose so sublime. The human person is constituted, they say, to be a mirror of God; and God, being imaged in that mirror, as in Christ, is held up to the view of this and other worlds. It certainly is to the view of this; and if the Divine nature can use this organ so effectively to express itself unto us—if it can bring itself, through the looks, tones, motions, and conduct of a human person, more close to our sympathies than by any other means, how can we think that an organ so communicative, inhabited by us, is not always breathing our spirit and transferring our image insensibly to others?

I have protracted the argument on this subject beyond what I could have wished, but I cannot dismiss it without suggesting a few thoughts necessary to its complete practical effect.

One very obvious and serious inference from it, and the first which I will name, is, that it is impossible to live in this world, and escape responsibility. It is not they alone, as you have seen, who are trying purposely to convert or corrupt others, who exert an influence; you cannot live without exerting influence. The doors of your soul are open on others, and theirs on you. You inhabit a house which is well nigh transparent; and what you are within, you are ever showing yourself to be without, by signs that have no ambiguous expression. If you had the seeds of a pestilence in your body, you would not have a more active contagion, than you have in your tempers, tastes, and principles. Simply to be in this world whatever you are, is to exert an influence—an influence, too, compared with which mere language and persuasion are feeble. You say that you mean well; at least, you think you mean to injure no one. Do you injure no one? Is your example harmless? Is it ever on the side of God and duty? You cannot reasonably doubt that others are continually receiving impressions from your character. As little can you doubt that you must answer for these impressions. If the influence you exert is unconsciously exerted, then is it only the most sincere, the truest expression of your character. And for what can you be held responsible, if not for this? Do not deceive yourselves in the thought, that you are, at least, doing no injury, and are, therefore, living without responsibility; first make it sure that you are not every hour infusing moral death insensibly into your children, wives, husbands, friends, and acquaintances. By a mere look or glance, not unlikely, you are conveying the influence that shall turn the scale of some one's immortality. Dismiss, therefore, the thought that you are living without responsibility; that is impossible. Better is it frankly to admit the truth; and if you will risk the influence of a character unsanctified by duty and religion, prepare to meet your reckoning manfully, and "receive the just recompense of reward."

The true philosophy or method of doing good is also here explained. It is, first of all and principally, to be good—to have a character, that will of itself communicate good. There must and will be active effort where there is goodness of principle; but the latter we should hold to be the principal thing, the root and life of all. Whether it is a mistake more sad or more ridiculous to make mere stir synonymous with doing good, we need not inquire; enough to be sure, that one has taken up such a notion of doing good, is, for that reason, a nuisance to the Church. The Christain is called a "light," not lightning. In order to act with effect on others, he must walk in the Spirit, and thus become the image of goodness: he must be so akin to God, and so filled with His dispositions, that he shall seem to surround himself with a hallowed atmosphere. It is folly to endeavor to make ourselves shine before we are luminous. If the sun without his beams should talk to

the planets, and argue with them till the final day, it would not make them shine; there must be light in the sun itself, and then they will shine of course. And this, my brethren, is what God intends for you all. It is the great idea of His gospel, and the work of His Spirit, to make you "lights in the world." His greatest joy is to give you character, to beautify your example, to exalt your principles, and make you each the depository of His own almighty grace. But in order to this, something is necessary on your part—a full surrender of your mind to duty and to God, and a perpetual desire of this spiritual intimacy; having this, having a participation thus of the goodness of God, you will as naturally communicate good as the sun communicates his beams.

Our doctrine of unconscious and undesigning influence shows how it is, also, that the preaching of Christ is often so unfruitful, and especially in times of spiritual coldness. It is not because truth ceases to be truth, nor, of necessity, because it is preached in a less vivid manner, but because there are so many influences, preaching against the preacher. He is one, the people are many; his attempt to convince and persuade is a voluntary influence; their lives, on the other hand, and especially the lives of those who profess what is better, are so many unconscious influences, ever streaming forth upon the people, and back and forth between each other. He preaches the truth, and they, with one consent, are preaching the truth down; and how can he prevail against so many, and by a kind of influence so unequal? When the people of God are glowing with spiritual devotion to Him, and love to men, the case is different; then they are all preaching with the preacher, and making an atmosphere of warmth for his words to fall in; "great is the company of them that publish" the truth and proportionally great its power. Shall I say more? Have you not already felt, my brethren, the application to which I would bring you? We do not exonerate ourselves; we do not claim to be nearer to God or holier than you; but ah! you know not how easy it is to make a winter about us, or how cold it feels! Our endeavor is to preach the truth of Christ and His cross as clearly and as forcibly as we can. Sometimes it has a visible effect, and we are filled with joy; sometimes it has no effect, and then we struggle on, as we must, but under great oppression. Have we none among you that preach against us in your lives? If we show you the light of God's truth, does it never fall upon banks of ice, which if the light shines through, the crystal masses are yet as cold as before? We do not accuse you; that we leave to God, and to those who may rise up in the last day to testify against you. If they shall come out of your own families; if they are the children that wear your names, the husband or wife of your affections; if they declare that you, by your example, kept them away from Christ's truth and mercy, we may have accusations to meet of our own and we leave you to acquit yourselves as best you may. I only warn you, here, of the guilt which our Lord Jesus Christ will impute to them that hinder His Gospel.

SERMON CCCCXXVIII.

BY THE REV. RUFUS ANDERSON, D.D.,

ONE OF THE SECRETARIES OF THE AMER. BOARD OF COM. FOR. MISS.

Delivered at the Ordination of Mr. Edward Webb, as a Missionary to the Heathen, at Ware, Mass., October 22, 1845.

THE THEORY OF MISSIONS TO THE HEATHEN.

Now then we are ambassadors for Christ; as though God did beseech you by us, we pray you, in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God.—2 Cor. v. 20.

Comparing the present period of the church with the apostolical, we come to two very different results respecting our own age. One is, that the facilities enjoyed by us for propagating the gospel throughout the world are vastly greater than those enjoyed by the apostles; the other is, that it is far more difficult now than it was then, to impart a purely spiritual character to missions among the heathen.

As to facilities, we have the advantage of the apostles in all respects, except the gift of tongues. The world, as a whole, was never so open to the preacher of the gospel since the introduction of the Christian dispensation. The civilization, too, that is connected with modern science, is all connected also with Christianity in some of its forms. I should add, that the civilization which the gospel has conferred upon our own New England is the highest and best, in a religious point of view, the world has yet seen.

But, on the other hand, this very perfection of our own social religious state becomes a formidable hindrance to establishing such purely spiritual missions among heathen nations, as were those of the apostolical times. Not that this is the only hindrance to this result; there are many others, but this is an important one. For the Christian religion is identified, in all our conceptions of it from our earliest years, with the almost universal diffusion among its professors of the blessings of education, industry, civil liberty, family government, social order, the means of a respectable livelihood, and a well-ordered community. Hence *our* idea of piety in converts among the heathen very generally involves the acquisition and possession, to a great extent, of these blessings; and *our* idea of the propagation of the gospel by means of missions is, to an equal extent, *the creation among heathen tribes and nations of a highly improved state of society, such as we ourselves enjoy.* And for this vast intellectual, moral, and social transformation we allow but a short time. We expect the first generation of converts to Christianity, even among savages, to come into all our fundamental ideas of morals, manners, political economy, social organization, right, justice, equity; although many of these are ideas which our own community has been ages in acquiring. If we discover that converts under the torrid zone go but half clothed, that they are idle on a soil where a small amount of labor will supply their

wants, that they sometimes forget the apostle's cautions to his converts, not to lie one to another, and to steal no more, in communities where the grossest vice scarcely affects the reputation, and that they are slow to adopt our ideas of the rights of man, we at once doubt the genuineness of their conversion, and the faithfulness of their missionary instructors. Nor is it surprising that this feeling is strongest, as it appears to be, in the most enlightened and favored portions of our country; since it is among those whose privilege it is to dwell upon the heights of Zion, that we have the most reason to expect this feeling, until they shall have reflected maturely on the difference there is between their own circumstances and states of mind, and those of a heathen and barbarous people.

Now the prevalence of these sentiments at home, has exerted an influence on all the missions. Nor is the influence new. You see it in the extent to which farmers and mechanics—pious but secular men—were sent, many years ago, along with the missionaries, to assist in reclaiming the savages of the wilderness from the chase, and settling them in communities like our own—a practice now nearly discontinued, except where the expense is borne by the national government.

Unless this influence is guarded against by missionaries and their directors, the result is that the missions have *a two-fold object of pursuit;* the one, that simple and sublime spiritual object of the ambassador for Christ mentioned in the text, "persuading men to be reconciled to God;" the other, the reorganizing, by various direct means, of the structure of that social system, of which the converts form a part. Thus the object of the missions becomes more or less complicated, leading to a complicated, burdensome, and perhaps expensive course of measures for its attainment.

I may be allowed, therefore, to invite attention to what is conceived to be *our true and only office and work in missions to the heathen.* "Now then we are ambassadors for Christ; as though God did beseech you by us, we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God." The ambassadors here spoken of were missionaries—missionaries to the heathen, for such were Paul and his associates; sent, instead of Christ the Mediator, on a ministry withheld from angels, to plead with rebellious men to become reconciled to God. They are ambassadors sent on the same general errand that brought the Lord Jesus from heaven, and their commission is to proclaim abroad the fact, history, design and effect of his atonement, and bring its renovating power to bear as widely as possible upon the human race.

It will be necessary to dwell a short time on the leading aspects of this enterprise. And,

1. The vocation of the missionary who is sent to the heathen, is not the same with that of the settled pastor.

The work of human salvation is one of vast extent, whether we regard the time it is to occupy, the objects upon which it operates, the agents it employs, or the results which are to be accomplished.

And it is performed with that regard for order and gradual development, which generally characterizes the works of God. Upon the Lord Jesus it devolved to make the atonement, thus preparing the way, as none else could do, for reconciling man to his Maker: and then He returned to the heaven whence he came. Upon his immediate disciples it then devolved to make proclamation of the atonement, and its kindred and dependent doctrines, throughout the world, the whole of which world, excepting Judea, was then heathen. This they were to do as his representatives and ambassadors; and to expedite the work, they were furnished with the gift of tongues, and an extraordinary divine influence attended their preaching. Their commission embraced only the proclamation of the gospel and planting its institutions. As soon as the gospel by their means had gained a footing in any one district of country, they left the work in charge to others, called elders and also bishops or overseers of the flock and church of God, whom they ordained for the purpose. Sometimes they did not remain even long enough to provide spiritual guides for the churches they had planted. "For this cause," says Paul to Titus, "left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldst set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders in every city, as I had appointed thee." The elders were the pastors of the new churches. Elsewhere the apostles speaks of different departments of labor and influence assigned to the ministers of Christ. He says that when Christ ascended up on high he gave gifts unto men; to some apostles, to some prophets, to some evangelists, to some pastors and teachers. Whatever was the peculiar office of "prophets" and "teachers," none can doubt that "evangelists" were fellow-laborers of the apostles in the missionary work, and that "pastors" had the stated care and instruction of particular churches. Now missionaries are the true and proper successors of the apostles and evangelists, and their sphere of duty is not the same with that of pastors, who are successors in their sacred functions, not so much of the apostles and evangelists as of the elders and bishops. It enters into the nature of the pastor's relation, that he remain, or be intended to remain, long the spiritual instructor of some one people. It is indeed as really his business to call sinners to repentance, as it is that of the missionary; but, owing to his more permanent relations, and to the fact that he is constituted the religious guide and instructor of his converts during the whole period of their earthly pilgrimage, his range of duty in respect to them is more comprehensive than that of the missionary in respect to his converts. The pastor is charged, in common with the missionary, with reconciling men to God; and he has also an additional charge, arising from the peculiar circumstances of his relation, with respect to their growth in grace and sanctification. But the missionary's *great* business in his personal labors, is with the unconverted. His embassy is to the rebellious, to beseech them, in Christ's stead, to be reconciled to God. His vocation, as a soldier of the cross, is to make conquests, and to go on, in the name of his divine Master,

"conquering and to conquer;" committing the security and permanency of his conquests to another class of men created expressly for the purpose. The idea of *continued conquest* is fundamental in missions to the heathen, and is vital to their spiritual life and efficiency. It will doubtless be found on inquiry, that missions among the heathen then have always ceased to be healthful and efficient, have ceased to evince the true missionary spirit in its strength, whenever they have ceased to be actively aggressive upon the kingdom of darkness.

In a word, the missionary prepares new fields for pastors; and when they are thus prepared, and competent pastors are upon the ground, he ought himself to move onward,—the pioneer in effect of a Christian civilization,—but in office, work, and spirit, an ambassador for Christ, to preach the gospel where it has not been preached. And, whatever may be said with respect to pastors, it is true of the missionary, that he is to keep himself as free as possible from entanglements with literature, science, and commerce, and with questions of church government, politics, and social order. For,

2. The object and work of the missionary are pre-eminently spiritual.

His embassy and message are as really from the other world, as if he were an angel from heaven. He who devotes himself to the work of foreign missions, comes thereby under peculiar engagements and obligations. His situation is in some important respects peculiar, compared with that of all others. His sphere of action lies beyond the bounds of his native land, beyond the bounds of Christendom, where society, and the family, and human nature lie all in ruins. As the great Originator and Lord of the enterprise came from the realms of heavenly blessedness to this world when it was one universal moral waste, so his representatives and ambassadors have now to go from those portions of the earth that have been illuminated by his gospel to regions that are as yet unvisited by these benign influences. They are therefore required pre-eminently to renounce the world. From the nature of the case they may make a greater sacrifice of worldly blessings, than their brethren at home can do, however much disposed. They forsake their native land, and the loved scenes of their youthful days. Oceans separate them from their relatives and friends. They encounter torrid heats and strange diseases. They traverse pathless wilds, and are exposed to burning suns and chilling night-damps, to rain or snow. Yet these things, when in their most repulsive forms, are reckoned by missionaries as the least of the trials appertaining to their vocation. The foreign missionary's greatest sacrifices and trials are *social* and *religious*. It is here that he has a severity of trial, which even the domestic missionary ordinarily cannot have. Whatever the devoted servant of Christ upon the frontiers may endure for the present, he sees the waves of a Christian civilization, not far distant, rolling onward, and knows that there will soon be all around him gospel institutions and a Chris-

tian community. But it is not so with the foreign missionary. It requires great strength of faith in Christ for him to look at his rising family, and meet with unruffled feelings towards the future. True, he sees the gospel taking hold of minds and hearts in consequence of his ministry, and souls converted and reconciled to God; he gathers churches: he sees around him the germs of a future Christian civilization. But then, owing to the imperfect and disordered state of society in heathen communities, he dares not anticipate so much social advancement for two or three generations to come, as would make it pleasant to think of leaving his children among the people for whose spiritual well-being he delights to spend his own strength and years. And then his heart yearns oftimes to be braced and cheered by social Christian fellowship of a higher order than he finds among his converts from heathenism. It is not in the "flesh-pots in Egypt" he looks back upon, nor any of the pleasant things that used to gratify his *senses* in his native land; but he does sometimes think of the kindred spirits he would find in that land, and of the high intellectual and spiritual fellowship he would enjoy in their society, and how it would refresh and strengthen his own mind and heart. Often there is a feeling of weakness and faintness arising from the want of such fellowship, which is the most painful part of his sufferings. The foreign missionary is obliged, indeed, to act pre-eminently upon the doctrine of a future life, and of God's supreme and universal government, and to make a deliberate sacrifice of time for eternity, and of earth for heaven. And this he does as an act of duty to his Redeemer, for the sake of extending the influence of his redemption, and bringing its reconciling and saving power to bear upon the myriads of immortal souls dwelling beyond the utmost verge of the Christian church.

And thus the foreign missionary is driven, as it were, by the very circumstances of his position, as well as led by his commission and his convictions of duty, to concentrate his attention and energies upon the soul, ruined though immortal. And truly it is a vast and mighty ruin he beholds—more affecting to look upon in the light of its own proper eternity, than would be the desolation of all the cities in the world. It is too vast a ruin for a feeble band to attempt the restoration of every part at once. As Nehemiah concentrated his energies upon rebuilding the walls of the city of his fathers, rightly concluding that if the walls were rebuilt and threw their encouraging protection around, the other portions of the city would rise of course; so the missionary, as a thoughtful and wise man, sets himself to reconcile the alienated heart to God, believing that that point being gained, and the principle of obedience implanted, and a highly spiritual religion introduced, a social renovation will be sure to follow. He considers not, therefore, so much the relations of man to man, as of man to God; not so much the relations and interests of time, as those of eternity; not so much the intellectual and social degradation and debasement, the result of barbarism or of iron-handed oppression, as the alienation

and estrangement of the heart of man from his Maker, and the deadly influence of hateful and destroying passions upon his soul. As when a house is burning in the dead of night, our first and great concern is not for the house, but for the sleeping dwellers within; so the missionary's first and great concern is for the *soul*, to save it from impending wrath.

And the *means* he employs in this ministry of reconciliation, are as single and spiritual as the end he has in view. He *preaches the cross of Christ*. The apostle Paul declares that this was his grand theme. And it is remarkable how experience is bringing modern missionaries to the same result. Their grand agent is oral instruction; their grand theme is the cross. And now, perhaps not less than in the days of the apostles, the Holy Spirit appears to restrict his *converting* influences among the heathen chiefly to this species of agency, and to this grand theme. Excepting in the schools, the usefulness of books is chiefly with those whose hearts have been in some measure moved and roused by the preached word. It appears to be the will of the great Redeemer, who came in person to begin the work, that his salvation shall everywhere be proclaimed in person by his ambassadors, and that his message of grace shall have all the impressiveness of look and voice and manner, which they are able to give it. After the manner of their illustrious predecessor, they must teach publicly, and from house to house, and warn every one night and day with tears. The necessity of this in order to reconcile rebellious men to God, has not been diminished by the multiplication of books through the press. Well authenticated cases of *conversion* among pagans, by means of books alone, not excepting even the Scriptures, are exceedingly rare. By the divine appointment, there must also be the living preacher; and his preaching must not be "with the wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect."

You see, then, brethren, the high spiritual calling of the missionary. At the very threshold of his work, he is required, in a pre-eminent degree, to renounce the world. His message, wherein lies his duty and all his hope of success, is concerning the cross of Christ; and the object of it is to restore the lost spiritual relation between man and God. The impression he is designing to make is directly upon the soul. And his work lies so altogether out of the common range of worldly ideas, and even of the ideas of many professed Christians, that multitudes have no faith in it; it is to them like a root out of a dry ground, and they see no form nor comeliness in it, and nothing that should lead them to desire it. Nor is it until the civilizing results come out, that these unsanctified or very partially sanctified persons can give the missionary work any degree of their respect.

The necessity of connecting a system of *education* with modern missions, is not inconsistent with the view we have taken of the true theory of missions to the heathen. The apostles had greatly the advantage of us in procuring elders, or pastors for their

churches. In their day the most civilized portions of the world were heathen—as if to show the weakness of mere human learning and wisdom; and the missionary labors of the apostles and their associates, so far as we have authentic accounts of them, were in the best educated and in some respects highly educated portions of the earth. Wherever they went, therefore, they found mind in comparatively an erect, intelligent, reasoning posture; and it would seem that men could easily have been found among their converts, who, with some special but brief instruction concerning the gospel, would be fitted to take the pastoral care of churches. But it appears that, until schools expressly for training pastors were in operation,—as ere long they were at Alexandria, Cæsarea, Antioch, Edessa, and elsewhere,—it pleased God essentially to aid in qualifying men for the office of pastors by a miraculous agency; the Holy Ghost exerting upon them a supernatural influence, by which their understandings were strengthened and spiritually illuminated, and they gifted with powers of utterance.

But, at the present time, the whole civilized world is at least nominally Christian, and modern missions must be prosecuted among uncivilized, or at least partially civilized tribes and nations, from which useful ideas have in great measure perished. Even in those heathen nations which make the greatest pretensions to learning, as in India, we find but little truth existing on any subject. Their history, chronology, geography, astronomy, their notions of matter and mind, and their views of creation and providence, religion and morals, are exceedingly destitute of truth. And yet it is not so much a *vacuity* of mind here that we have to contend with, as it is *plentitude of error*—the unrestrained accumulations and perversions of depraved intellect for three thousand years. But among savage heathens, it is *vacuity* of mind, and not a *plenitude*, we have to operate upon. For, the savage has few ideas, sees only the objects just about him, perceives nothing of the relations of things, and occupies his thoughts only about his physical experiences and wants. He knows nothing of geography, astronomy, history, nothing of his own spiritual nature and destiny, and nothing of God.

In these circumstances and without the power of conferring miraculous gifts, modern missionaries are constrained to resort to education in order to procure pastors for their churches. They select the most promising candidates, and take the usual methods to train them to stand alone and firm in the gospel ministry, and to be competent spiritual guides to others. This creates, it will be perceived, a necessity for a system of education of greater or less extent in each of the missions, embracing even a considerable number of elementary schools. The whole is designed to secure, through the divine blessing, a competent native ministry, who shall aid missionaries in their work, and at length take their places. The schools, moreover, of every grade, are, or ought to be so many preaching places, so many congregations of youth, to whom, often with parents and friends attending, the gospel is more or less formally proclaimed.

I have thus endeavored, my brethren, to set before you the foreign missionary enterprise in what I conceive to be its true scriptural character; as an enterprise, the object of which, and the sole object, is the reconciling of rebellious men in heathen lands to God.

And what is true of the individual missionary, is of course equally true of the Missionary Society, which directs his labors and is the medium of his support. The Society sends forth men to be evangelists, rather than permanent pastors; and when pastors are required by the progress and success of the work, it seeks them among native converts on the ground. And herein it differs from the appropriate usages of the Home Missionary Society, which, operating on feeble churches within Christian communities, or in districts that are soon to be covered with a Christian civilization of some sort, sends forth its preachers all to become settled pastors as soon as possible. The foreign missionary work is in fact a vast *evangelism;* with conquest, in order to extend the bounds of the Redeemer's kingdom, for its object; having as little to do with the relations of this life and the things of the world and sense, and as few relations to the kingdoms of this world, as is consistent with the successful prosecution of its one grand object—the restoring, in the immortal soul of man, of that blessed attraction to the Centre of the Spiritual Universe which was lost at the fall.

This method of conducting foreign missions, besides its evident conformity to Scripture, is supported by various weighty considerations.

1. It is the only method that, as a system of measures, will commend itself strongly to the consciences and respect of mankind.

The first mission sent forth under the care of the American Board, was such a mission. And it was sent to the subjects of a nation, with which our country was then unhappily at war. But the missionaries were regarded on all hands as belonging pre-eminently to a kingdom not of this world, and having an object of a purely spiritual nature. And when, notwithstanding this, the policy of the East Indian government would have sent them away, it was this that gave convincing and overwhelming force to the following appeal made by our brethren to the governor of Bombay:

"We entreat you by the spiritual miseries of the heathen, who are daily perishing before your eyes, and under your Excellency's government, not to prevent us preaching Christ to them. We entreat you by the blood of Jesus which he shed to redeem them,—as ministers of Him, who has all power in heaven and earth, and who with his farewell and ascending voice commanded his ministers to go and teach all nations, we entreat you not to prohibit us from teaching these heathen. By all the principles of our holy religion, by which you hope to be saved, we entreat you not to hinder us from preaching the same religion to these perishing idolaters. By all the solemnities of the judgment day, when your Excellency must meet your heathen subjects before God's tribunal, we entreat you not to hinder us from preaching to them that

gospel, which is able to prepare them, as well as you, for that awful day."

Nothing but a consciousness of the high spirituality of their object and the impossibillity of connecting it with questions of a secular nature, imparted boldness to our brethren to make this appeal, and gave it favor and efficiency in the high places of power. And it is this, which lately preserved our brethren on Mount Lebanon harmless amid the fury and carnage of a civil war. And this it is that imparts a degree of inviolability to the persons and efforts of Protestant heralds of the cross among all the nations which respect their religion. It is the grand predominance of the *spiritual* in their characters and pursuits, showing that they really do belong to a kingdom not of this world, and are not to be involved in the conflicting relations and interests of earthly communities. English statesmen in India acknowledge, that the general prevalence of Christianity in that country would at length make it impossible for their nation to hold the country in subjection, and yet they encourage the labors of the missionary. This they do because the missionary's *object*, whatever be the known *tendency* of his labors, is not to change the civil relations of the people, but to give them the gospel and save their souls; and because these statesmen are convinced in their consciences, that this is an object of unquestionable benevolence and obligation, for which Christ died, for which the ministry was instituted, which at this day is to be countenanced and encouraged at all events by every man claiming the name of a Christian; and which, however humbling it shall prove in its results to avaricious and ambitious nations, cannot be otherwise than beneficial on the broad scale of the world and to the great family of man.

2. This method of conducting missions is the only one on which missionaries can be obtained in large numbers, and kept cheerfully in the field.

For objects that are not spiritual and eternal, men will seldom renounce the world for themselves and their families, as missionaries must do. Mere philosophers have never gone as missionaries; and seldom do mere philanthropists go into the heathen world, nor would they remain long, should they happen to go. Nor will a merely impulsive, unreflecting piety ever bring about a steady, persevering, laborious, self-denying mission. It generally gives out before the day for embarkation, or retires from the field before the language is acquired and the battle fairly commenced. Nothing but the grand object of reconciling men to God, with a view to their eternal salvation, and the happiness and glory thus resulting to Christ's kingdom, will call any considerable number of missionaries into the foreign field, and keep them cheerfully there. And it is necessary that this object be made to stand out alone, in its greatness and majesty, towering above all other objects, as the hoary-headed monarch of the Alps towers above the inferior mountains around him. It is not fine conceptions of the beautiful and orderly in human society, that will fire the zeal of a missionary; it

is not rich and glowing conceptions of the life and duties of a pastor; it is not broad and elevated views of theological truth, nor precise and comprehensive views of the relations of that truth to moral subjects. It is something more than all this, often the result of a different cast of mind and combination of ideas. The true missionary character indeed is based upon a single sublime conception—that of *reconciling immortal souls to God.* To gain this with an effective practical power, the missionary needs himself to have passed from death unto life, and to have had deep experience of his own enmity to God and hell-desert, and of the vast transforming agency of the reconciling grace of God in Christ. As this conception has more of moral greatness and sublimity in it than any other that ever entered the mind of man, no missionary can attain to the highest elevation and dignity of his calling, unless he have strong mental power and a taste for the morally sublime. This the apostle Paul had. What conceptions of his office and work and of spiritual things animated the great soul of that apostle! "Now, then, we are ambassadors for Christ; as though God did beseech you by us, we pray you, in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God."—"Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man the things which God hath prepared for them that love him."—"Oh the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God."—"Able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth and length and depth and height, and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge."

To make persevering and useful missionaries, however, it is not necessary that the power of thought and of spiritual apprehension should come nearly up to that of the apostle Paul. But there should be a similar cast of mind, similar views and feelings, and a similar character. There should be a steady and sober, but real enthusiasm, sustained by a strongly spiritualized doctrinal experience, and by the "powers of the world to come," intent upon reconciling men to God from a conviction of its transcendant importance.

Such men must compose the great body of every mission, or it will not be worth supporting in the field; and the only way such men can be induced to engage in the work is by having the idea of spiritual conquest, through the cross of Christ, the predominant and characteristic idea of the enterprise. That will attract their attention while they are preparing for the ministry; that will enlist their consciences and draw their hearts; that will constrain them to refuse every call to settle at home, however inviting; and if they have learning and eloquence, that will lead them the more to desire to go where Christ has not been preached, where useful talent of every kind will find the widest scope for exercise.

Nor will any other scheme of missions that was ever devised keep missionaries cheerfully in the field. It is only by having the eye intent on the relations the heathen sustain to God, and on their reconciliation to him, and by cultivating the spirit of dependence

on God and the habit of looking to him for success, that the piety of a mission can be kept flourishing, its bond of union perfect, its active powers all in full, harmonious and happy exercise. And unless these results are secured, missionaries, like the soldiers of a disorganized army, will lose their courage, their energy and zeal, their serenity and health, and will leave the field. Alas for a mission, where the absorbing object of attention with any of its members is anything else, than how Christ crucified shall be preached to the heathen so as most effectually to persuade them to be reconciled to God.

3. This method of conducting missions is the only one that will subjugate the heathen world to God.

No other will be found mighty to pull down the strong holds of the god of this world. The weapons of our warfare must be spiritual. The enemy will laugh at the shaking of a spear, at diplomatic skill, at commerce, learning, philanthropy, and every scheme of social order and refinement. He stands in fear of nothing but the cross of Christ, and therefore we must rely on nothing else. With that we may boldly pass all his outworks and entrenchments, and assail his very citadel. So did Philip, when he preached Jesus as the way of reconciliation to the eunuch; so did Peter, when preaching to the centurion; so did Apollos, when preaching to the Greeks; so did Paul, through his whole missionary career. It is wonderful what faith those ancient worthies had in the power of a simple statement of the doctrine of salvation through the blood of Christ. But they had felt its power in their own hearts, they saw it on the hearts of others, and they found reason to rely on nothing else. And the experience of modern missions has done much to teach the inefficacy of all things else, separate from this. Who does not know, that the only cure for the deep-seated disorders of mankind must be wrought in the heart, and that nothing operates shere like the doctrine of salvation by the cross of Christ? This it true in the most highly civilized communities; but perhaps it is specially true among benighted heathens. In their deplorable moral degradation, they need just such an argument, striking even the very senses, and convincing of sin, of their own lost state, and of the love of God. Nothing else will be found like that to bridge the mighty gulf which separates their thoughts from God and the spiritual world. Nothing else will concentrate, like that, the rays of divine truth and grace upon their frozen affections. With the truth, that God so loved the world as to give his only begotten Son that whosoever believeth on him should not perish but have everlasting life, we go forth through the heathen world; and, with anything like the faith in its efficacy through the Holy Spirit which the apostles had, we shall be blessed with much of their success. Yes, my brethren, this is the only effectual way of prosecuting missions among the heathen—*holding up* CHRIST AS THE ONLY SAVIOR OF LOST SINNERS. It requires the fewest men, the least expense, the shortest time. It makes the least demand for learning in the great body of the laborers. It involves the least complica-

tion in means and measures. It is the only course that has the absolute promise of the presence of Christ, or that may certainly look for the aid of the Holy Spirit. It keeps Christ constantly before the missionary's own soul, as an object of intensest interest and desire, with a vast sanctifying, sustaining, animating influence on his own mind and preaching. It furnishes him with a power transcending all that human wisdom ever contrived for rousing and elevating the soul of man and drawing it heavenward—the idea of LOVE, infinite and infinitely disinterested, personified in the Lord Jesus, and suffering to the death to save rebellious and ruined man! And if the doctrine comes glowing from our own experience, we shall not fail to get the attention of the heathen, and our success among them will far exceed what we might expect among gospel-hardened sinners here at home. I might dwell long on the history of missions, ancient and modern, in the most satisfactory illustration of this point, did the time permit; but it is not necessary.

Let me add, that there is no way so direct and effectual as this, to remove the social disorders and evils that afflict the heathen world: indeed, there is no other way. Every specific evil and sin does not need, and cannot have, a separate remedy; for they are all streams from one fountain, having a common origin in a depraved and rebellious heart. Urge home, then, the divinely appointed remedy for a wicked heart; purify the fountain; let love to God and man be made to fill the soul; and soon the influence will appear in every department and relation of life. If reforms in religion and morals are not laid deep in the heart, they will be deceptive, and at all events transient. The evil spirit will return in some form, with seven-fold power. New England owes her strong repugnance to slavery, and her universal rejection of that monstrous evil, to the highly evangelical nature of her preaching. And were the whole southern section of our own land, or even a considerable portion of it, favored with such highly evangelical preaching, slavery could not there long exist. But in heathen lands especially, an effective public sentiment against sin, in any of its outward forms, can be created nowhere, except in the church; and it can be there created only by preaching Christ in his offices and works of love and mercy, with the aid of the ordinances he has given for the benefit of his disciples, especially the sacrament of his supper. Thus at length, even in barbarous heathen lands, the force of piety in the hearts of the individual members of the church will be raised above that of ignorance, prejudice, the power of custom and usage, the blinding influence of self-interest falsely apprehended, and the ridicule and frowns of an ungodly and perverse world. Indeed, if we would make anything of converts in pagan lands, we must bring them to the ordinances of the gospel, and into the church, as soon as they give satisfactory evidence of regeneration; for they are too child-like, too weak, too ignorant, to be left exposed to the dangers that exist out of the fold, even until they shall have learned all fundamental truths. And besides.

ne school of Christ for young converts from heathenism, *stands within the fold*, and *there*, certainly, the compassionate Savior would have them all gathered and carried in the arms, and cherished "even as a nurse cherisheth her children."

Finally: This method of conducting missions is the only one that will unite in this work the energies of the churches at home.

Well understood, this will unite the energies of the churches—so far as Christians can be induced to prosecute missions for the purpose of reconciling men to God. Making this the grand aim of missions, and pressing the love of Christ home upon the hearts and consciences of men, as the grand means of effecting this, will certainly commend itself to the understandings and feelings of all intelligent Christians. Not only will a large number of good and faithful missionaries be obtained, but they will be supported, and prayed for, and made the objects of daily interest and concern.

Let it be our prayer, that God will be pleased to strengthen our faith in the realities of the unseen world. Then shall we be better able to pray as we ought for our missionary brethren, that they may be intent on their single but great object of winning souls to Christ, and be so imbued with the spirit of Christ, that his image shall be fully stamped on all their converts. Let us urge upon our brethren among the heathen the imperative duty of making full proof of their ministry as *missionaries*, rather than as *pastors;* and let us lay upon them "no greater burden," than the "necessary things" appertaining to their high and peculiar vocation. We must indeed hold them to the principle, that they shall treat those only as loyal subjects of our infinite Sovereign, who give evidence of hearty submission and reconciliation; but we will leave it to their better-informed judgments to determine, —in the remote, vast and varied, and to us almost unknown fields of their labors,—what is and what ought to be satisfactory evidence of actual reconciliation.

And when the principles of love and obedience are once restored to men, and men are at peace with God, and united to Him, then will they be at peace with one another. Then wars will cease, and all oppression. Then the crooked in human affairs shall be made straight and the rough places plain, the valleys shall be exalted and the mountains and hills made low, and the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh see it together.

"In one sweet symphony of praise
Gentile and Jew shall then unite;
And Infidelity, ashamed,
Sink in the abyss of endless night.

"Soon Afric's long-enslaved sons
Shall join with Europe's polished race,
To celebrate, in different tongues,
The glories of redeeming grace.

"From east to west, from north to south,
Emmanuel's kingdom shall extend;
And every man, in every face,
Shall meet a brother and a friend."

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SERMON CCCCXXIX.

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CHRIST IN THE BELIEVER AS THE HOPE OF GLORY.

To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.—Colossians, i. 27.

In the words of our text, the Apostle speaks of the Gospel under the title of a "mystery." Such it was, considered simply as resident in the unrevealed intentions of the Divine Mind; it was unknown to men, both in its nature and application, until developed by its Author. It was especially unknown to the Jews in its overture of mercy to the Gentile world. They had monopolized the favors of Heaven, and to them it seemed mysterious that a religion claiming to proceed from Jehovah, should look benignantly upon any but themselves. The Apostle, as the messenger of Christ to the Gentiles, seeks to correct this delusion; he sets forth the Gospel as "the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth," whatever may have been his previous condition, or national character. As now administered by him, it was no mystery, either in its facts or its requisitions, or the persons to whom it might be properly commended. The evolution effected by Christ and his Apostles, had dissipated all the darkness which hitherto obscured these important points. It might indeed contain mysteries of another type; but the particular *form* of mystery had in view by the Apostle, had altogether disappeared. This very mystery is now "made manifest to his saints; to whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory." Obscurity had receded before the march of light; and Christ now dwelling in the Colossian Christian, as the hope of glory, is the mystery unveiled, and transformed into the simplicity of apprehensible truth. This mystery is Christ himself, Christ now "made *manifest* to his saints, Christ "*in* you, the hope of glory."

In the ensuing reflections, I shall ask your attention to this expression of the Apostle—"which is Christ in you, the hope of glory."

I. *In the first place, let us endeavor to understand the first item in this significant expression, i. e., "Christ in you."*—Every careful reader of the Bible must be familiar with the fact, that Christ is frequently spoken of as being *in* His people; also that they are represented as being *in* Him. The passages containing this style of description are abundant in the New Testament. They suggest for our consideration this question: In what *sense* is Christ in His people? The theologists of Rome have built upon these passages the doctrine of a *mystical* union between the believer and his Savior, and garnished it with the dogma of a mediating priesthood of men, to create and perpetuate this union. This union is not one of faith—not an union with spiritual exercises in *us*, and divine influences from *Him*, for its basis; but something which *transcends* all these ideas—physical, or semi-physical, totally inexplicable in its nature, and hence called *mystical*. It seems psychologically to confound the two beings, and mould them into one existence. Upon it rests the chief efficacy of the Sacrament, to secure which there must be the prior fact of transubstantiation, and to accomplish the latter there must be a mediating priesthood of men, with full powers. The reformation under Luther opened the era for the explosion of this monstrous *quadrupedal* error; it brought into clear light the doctrine of forensic justification by faith in Christ Jesus, abolished the system of *physiological* grace, and did much to return men to the simplicity and purity of apostolic times. We have no doubt that Luther was right—much nearer to the Apostles than the Romanists, or the Oxfordists of the present day. We need not go to the incomprehensibilities of the mystical union with its cognate absurdities, to make the words of the text and of parallel scriptures instructive to the intelligence, and immensely precious to the heart. The Protestant version is one which does honor to the language, and makes the fact one of inexhaustible good to him, whose soul is its subject. In the analysis of this fact, the following particulars may be named, as constituting the *indwelling* of Christ:

1. *He dwells in the believer in the intellectual, or doctrinal sense.*—"What *think* ye of Christ? is the test to try both your state and your scheme." Than this there never was a truer saying. Our conceptions of the blessed Savior involve a point of infinite moment; sure it is, that "we cannot be right in the rest, unless we think rightly of Him. To the question, what are we to think of Christ? the Bible returns a suitable answer; an answer, expressed in our creeds, but more fully drawn out in finer and richer shades in the very words of the sacred text. Now when we receive into our minds, as objects of conviction and firm belief, the disclosures of revelation in regard to Christ, then He is *in* us in the intellectual or doctrinal sense—a sense, which precedes all others, as it is the foundation of all others. He is then resident in our intelligence, the object of thought and meditation, wrapt up in the visions of the soul. In this sense, it will be perceived, there may be *degrees*

in the fullness, completeness, and power, with which he dwells in us. I am persuaded, that some Christians have much better views of their Redeemer than others; views, which make the heart burn, and evoke from retirement the moral sensibilities of true piety. This difference is not owing to a difference in the object, but to a difference in the use of our powers upon the object, and the means which conduct us thereto. For this reason, the impenitent have almost no idea of Christ; they are so occupied with the world, that they do not think enough of Him even to understand Him. They can explain the particular channel of their industry; but you put the question, what think ye of Christ? and their answer, if any, is but a miserable pattern of the truth. The same reason operates to produce diversity in the vividness and extent of view which is taken by Christian minds. It is not sufficient for us to adopt a system of religious symbols, however correct, and then permit them to sleep in the dormitory of a lifeless orthordoxy. This will never realize to us the idea of having our life "hid with Christ in God." We must learn how to transfer to our own minds, and there retain in living and everlasting remembrance, the teachings of God in regard to Him, who is the Prince of Peace, the Author of eternal salvation to every one that believeth. To accomplish this transfer, no better plan can be adopted than diligently and prayerfully to study the Scriptures. When they introduce to us a new conception, or a new phase of a previous conception, we must take it, most thoroughly digest it, and then add it to our stock of Christian knowledge. By this process, we shall experience a progressive enlargement of understanding; the term, *Christ*, will become something more than a mere Shibboleth, a mere religious watchword for party organization, or an appendage to fill up some little niche in the plan of redemption. He will jut out in bright effulgence, and cast His radiance over the whole scheme of life. Let us also be careful not to separate Him from those doctrines of the Bible, which define Him, and explain the methods and ends of His action; as careful not to separate them from Him. He magnifies the doctrines of redemption; and they also magnify Him. Without Him these doctrines are but mere abstractions, having no more power, than a mathematical theorem. Without them also He is not "the way, the truth and the life," as disclosed in the Bible. In disjoining the two, we do serious harm to both, and almost destroy their good impression upon our minds. The atonement itself degenerates into the emptiness of mere words, if we view it as *disconnected* with Him, who made it. Let us therefore be careful to keep the Worker and the work always combined in our minds; and when we travel from the one, be sure to carry the other with us. The Christianity of the New Testament is a Christianity of *concretes*, not of depleted *abstracts*; and it is best that we should have it in our minds, as God has placed it in the Bible.

2. *Christ dwells in the believer, as a Being who engages his affectionate confidence.*—The intellectual indwelling of Christ lays

a solid and changeless basis for this confidence. Being properly seen, He is seen to be such a Being, that the pious mind not only feels that it *ought* to trust, but is also conscious of the fact that it *does* trust in Him. Nothing in Him is perceived which is calculated to intimidate or repel our approach, but everything to invite and win our utmost affection and faith. The fact that we are sinners, that we feel intensely the moral demerit of sin, that our past character is a never ceasing badge of reproach and guilt, is the fact in us, the argument subsisting in our condition, why we should betake ourselves to the cross, and go to Him whose blood cleanseth from all sin. This is what in our condition we *must* do, unless we adopt the plan of *self-merit*, thus proving that we are not believers in His name. As we approach Him, we find His throne luminous with promise; the sceptre of peace and pardon is extended, that we may touch it and live. Having come to Him, having looked up to God through Christ, exclaiming "Abba Father," then our wisdom is to remain in this posture, neither receding *from* it, nor attempting to pass *beyond* it, for we can do nothing better than to love and trust our Savior. The language of our hearts should be--

"My faith looks up to thee,
Thou Lamb of Calvary,
Savior divine."

This is to be our spiritual *dialect* while we live—the last action of our souls as we quit this mortal sphere, and rise to worlds unseen. It is this which keeps the Christian out of the slough of *despondency*, so graphically pictured by Bunyan. His confidence in Christ is the right arm of his soul--the moral lever, on which and through which he exerts his strength. It does not look out upon a *vacuum*, and weary itself in searching for a resting point. Though the object be invisible, yet the mind is privileged to act "as seeing Him, who is invisible." It overleaps the limitation set by the senses—folds up in its own convictions the facts of Revelation; these constitute a luminous pathway, on which it makes a rapid journey to the residence of the Immortal King, with whom to make a cheerful deposit of itself and all its interests. Here it is, and nowhere else, that we can realize the truth of the Savior's promise, "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you; not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid." To the soul leaning upon Christ He substantially says, "I am the good Shepherd; the good Shepherd giveth his life for the sheep." "And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand." How gloriously therefore is Christ in the mind of the believer, as a Being engaging his fullest confidence! He gave Him this confidence in the matter of his salvation, when he first believed; and he has seen no subsequent occasion for withdrawing it; all his experience goes to confirm and increase it.

Although the *objective* grounds of this confidence are in themselves unchangeable, yet the exercise in *us* is capable of increase, from the point of conversion to the full assurance of faith—resulting in a state which casts out all fear, and imparts a heavenly composure, such as the world can neither give nor take away. The more frequent the exercise, the stronger it becomes, and the more expanded and impressive appear the reasons which justify it. This process of growth, vigorously kept up in the soul, may reach a state of enlarged maturity, and ascend to a point of amazing power. How far we have advanced as Christians towards this happy attainment, it is not my province to decide. Christ may have been in us the hope of glory, yet in a very *defective* and imperfect manner; we may not have honored Him with our confidence, as we should. If so, then let the past suffice—let us not compare ourselves among ourselves, but strive individually to exercise more of a pure, simple and affectionate trust in Him, and this trust more constantly. Nothing prevents our rising but ourselves; and we do rise as fast as, on the *whole*, we wish. To envy the attainments of others who have gone far beyond us, is as selfish as it is profitless. The path they trod with so much delight invites our feet; and if we choose to be tardy on this heavenly road, let us remember it is because we will have it so.

3. *Christ dwells in the believer by the assimilating energy of His own most glorious character.*—Nothing is more familiar, than our tendency to derive our mental and moral complexion from objects with which we are frequently in contact, which habitually engage our thoughts, and deeply interest the sympathies and affections of our hearts. Children in this way learn the manners and inherit the moral features of their parents, whether for good or evil. The sailor carries upon his mind the impress of the rolling ocean and the wild howling storm. Those who associate with the degraded, themselves become degraded; those who mingle with the virtuous, inhale the balmy influences of a purer life. Companionship with very devoted Christians has a tendency to make us devoted; they spontaneously impart, and we as spontaneously receive—we come more or less to resemble them by the frequency of our intercourse with them.

This principle of our mental nature, as you perceive, is a principle of *assimilation*, by which given properties beget in us their own image. Through this principle the character of Christ is made effective in moulding that of His people. If He dwell in them in the intellectual sense, if He be an object of implicit confidence and strong affection, the tendency is to make them Christ-like. A painful and protracted controversy, subsisting between two members of the same church, was once brought under my review. The one felt herself most deeply injured by the other. To the aggrieved it was suggested, that she probably over-estimated the injury, and judged too severely in regard to the motives of the offending party. These thoughts seemed to produce no imp[redacted]

sion for good. The following train of reflection was then proposed: Let it be granted that the injury is all you suppose, and the motives as bad—the question then is, How ought you to feel and treat the offender? That you may decide this question properly, place yourself before the cross, and behold the Son of God, your Savior, in the agonies of death—hear Him exclaiming, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do!" Now will you be *Christ-like*, or not? Her mind was overwhelmed—tears began to flow; and, after a moment's struggle, she replied, "Yes, I will be Christ-like!" She arose, went to an adjoining room, and made a hearty confession. This drew out another; peace was proclaimed, and sealed with prayer. In this case you see the power of a *single* feature in the Savior's character to beget itself in the character of an erring, but genuine disciple. Now that which is true of one feature, is as true of His *whole* character. The whole is a perfect model of moral beauty, presented as our example and designed for our imitation. As we hold intercourse with it, we more and more perceive its transcendent excellence. We cannot fail to admire it, and, if we have the least spark of piety, to love its Author. That man is a total stranger to religion who does not love Christ in the light of his moral character. That which we admire in a being whom we love, can never be an object of steady thought, without *transforming* us somewhat into his likeness. The more we love, the greater the transforming power of the model, and the greater the power, the more we love—the two principles interweaving their agency to make a soul like Him, who is the great example of mankind. This process of assimilation does not consist in an *imputation* of His moral righteousness to us, but in a spiritual *procreation* in us of that which is seen in Him. Beholding the glory of the Lord, we "are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord."

It may be suggested, that, as a mere *thesis*, this is a very pleasant picture for the Christian to look upon; but why, as a matter of fact, are the disciples so unlike their Lord and Master? Why do they possess so little of His Spirit? Some seem disposed to think, that it is not *possible* in this world, all things considered, to be very devoted as saints of the Most High God—that but very little of the spirit of our Master is to be sought in this unfriendly clime—that no great efforts are to be made, no living proximity to Him attained, until we see Him in the heavenly world, face to face. This view contradicts the Bible, contradicts the experience of the Apostles, also the experience of some Christians called *eminent*, not because they are such, when compared with the claims and character of Christ, but simply to mark the difference between them and other Christians. Others again seem to imagine, that the *inner* Christianity of Christ's disciples is of a much purer type than the *outward*; and hence external appearances are not the proper index to the state of the heart. This upon its face is a

very suspicious theory. It repeals the law of Heaven, which fixes upon the fruits of piety as its proper evidence. This *concealed* religion, so modest that it never shows itself—that has no public testimony to render—never visible in the life—with no outward phase, which either God or man can see—*this*, I am persuaded, is not the religion of the New Testament. True piety seeks the air; *real* love to Christ and conformity to His character must have an outward expression. It is infinitely important that this should be the case, so that the world may see and feel its power. Let us not therefore balance our account with duty, and turn off a painful inquiry by assuming for ourselves a *hidden* religion, not only veiled, but incompatible with external appearances. The probability is, that our *inner* Christianity is no better than the *outward*; and in many cases it is not as good, for worldly motives may secure an external deportment, which does not arise from Christian feelings, and which would not exist but for those worldly motives.

If there be a *total* want of the moral features which shone so conspicuously in the character of Christ, then it is perfectly certain that we are not Christians—that not even the *first* principles of piety have been planted in our hearts, whatever may be our hopes. Our character as Christians must survive this test, or we are building on the sand. If these features, however, exist in us, yet in a very *defective* and *imperfect* manner, then the cause of the deficiency is to be sought in two directions—i. e. *in what we do, and in what we omit to do.* If Christians, under any pretence, will bury up a large part of their affections with the things of this world—if they will not learn to live for Christ in all that they do, and thus make every act a means of grace—if they will not devoutly study the Bible—if they will not hold earnest and frequent communions with Heaven—if they will not live in contact with the glorious character and wonderful work of the Son of God: then, in exact proportion to their waywardness in these and kindred particulars, will they feel or not feel the assimilating power of Christ in their hearts, and evince the same in their lives. In the nature of things it cannot be otherwise. If, on the other hand, we be faithful according to our privileges, and appreciate life mainly as a brief season for doing good and preparing for eternal glory, then we shall be proportionately like our Savior; and, as the distance between us and the tomb shortens, it will be more and more manifest, that we are His and on our way to heaven. There is no danger, unless we diverge into the folly of self-righteousness, spiritual pride, and self-ignorance, that we shall outstrip our privileges. Sound, judicious, and Bible efforts to be assimilated into the image of the Son are always safe; they never did the Christian any harm—they cannot fail to do him good. You never retired to your closet to pray over your own condition, asking God to forgive it and grant a better one, without a benediction in the very act. You never spent an hour in devout study and reflecti—

upon the character of your Redeemer, his sufferings in your behalf, the wonders of his grace, without having your affections drawn towards Him, and your spiritual sympathies silently yielding to a glorious impulse from the heavenly world. Let us then multiply these and parallel scenes; in this way shall the image of Christ be developed in the experience of our hearts, and his religion become truly the theme and the song of our lives.

II. Having now formed some conception of an *indwelling* Christ, let us contemplate Him under the second phase of the text, i. e. as "*the hope of glory.*"

What is hope? It is the desire of some future good, attended with an expectation of obtaining it. Whoever desires some good, not now in his possession, and expects to realize that good, has in his soul the phenomenon of hope. Remove the expectation, and you convert his condition into one of *despair,* painful in proportion to the intensity of the disappointed desire. The *validity* of hope depends, not upon the strength of desire, but upon the grounds which support the expectation that the desired good shall be obtained. If there be no such grounds, then the hoper is deceived, and his hope worthless; if they exist in a very imperfect manner, then his hope has a corresponding validity; if they be clear and certain, then his hope is built on a rock.

What then is "the hope of glory?" This hope refers to our personal condition after death. The view commanded by this hope is, that our future state shall be one of endless blessedness, complete and perfect well-being. The mind thus hoping entertains the most august and rapturous view of its own destiny after death—such as calls forth the most intense desire, as ought to make it happy and cheerful, rob death of its terrors, and fill immortality with charms. The source whence it derives this view is the Bible, on whose pages are spread out the good things God has prepared for them that love Him. The revelations of the Scriptures make the hope, in respect to its object, "the hope of *glory,*" "a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." As the mind desires, so also it expects one day to share in this glory. This is its posture in regard to itself, its high hope while on the road to eternal scenes.

What then is meant by the proposition, that Christ dwelling in us is "the hope of glory?" I suppose the idea is, that the indwelling of Christ, in the senses already explained, *begets* this hope—is its *cause*—lays in the soul the proper foundation for its existence. The causal relation between Christ and this hope may be understood by giving our attention to two particulars.

1. The indwelling of Christ furnishes to the soul the grounds of the hope in question, grounds which are external to the soul, and exist independently of its conditions.

The *Pagan,* unvisited by the light of the Gospel, knows nothing of its realities, its glory, or its power. He does not know that there

is a Gospel for the dying sons of men; the name of *Jesus* has never reached his ear; and of course within his mind Christ does not exist as the hope of glory. His failure, however, to perceive does not lessen the realities of the redemption scheme; it simply cuts him off from communion with them, and leaves him to wander through life, unpiloted to immortality by their light. This is his sad position. How large his claim upon our Christian benevolence! The *skeptic* of Christian lands *half* perceives—then shuts his eyes—then totally denies—then sinks into utter darkness amid the splendors of noon-day, exiled from eternal wisdom by an intellectual blockade. The *caviler* sports, and at his peril plays with overlasting sun-beams, too merry in his mood, too full of the tricks of sophistry to have Christ installed in his mind as the hope of glory. The *careless* sinner sleeps over the theme, and dies within its sight, not sufficiently awakened to apprehend the amazing worth of the Gospel of Christ, and improve it while he can. All these persons, by their mental posture, are excluded from Christ; He is not in their minds as the hope of glory. While their condition is their own deplorable loss, yet the facts of Christianity live beyond them, independently of them, and will thus live for ever.

Now in distinction from these persons, I have in view a mind in which Christ so dwells, that the system of Christianity, as it comes into this mind, brings with it its own peculiar grounds of hope, and enthrones them upon its deepest convictions. The system transmits its own realities to the bosom of this intelligence, as objects of thought, as elements for hope. In the transmission it undergoes no change; it simply acquires life and locality in the soul as its theatre; it enters that soul as it issued from the Divine mind; it there begets hope, because the foundation for hope exists in the very *nature* of the system. Let me endeavor to make this point perfectly clear to your apprehension.

What is Christianity? The proper answer is, that it is the religion taught, established, confirmed and *sealed* by Jesus Christ. What then is this religion? I cannot now tell you *all* that it is. It will be sufficient, however, to say, that in the person of Christ it presents a glorious Savior—Himself *central* in a system of divine doctrines, teaching the science of salvation, of which he is the Author—also bearing in full inscription the pledges and promises of God, and thus committing the power of Him who made the universe to the result named in the system, upon the terms specified. What then is this result? I reply, the salvation of the soul—salvation from sin and eternal wo, for the Gospel is "the power of God unto *salvation* to every one that believeth." Who therefore can fail to see, that here lie the grounds of hope for somebody—grounds not created by human belief, as they are not destroyed by human rejection? In its very nature Christianity looks towards the production of hope in the human family; it bids the sinner to rise and cast away his sins, and cast himself upon the resources of God in Christ Jesus; the Christian, to rejoice and

struggle on; telling both that efforts here made shall not be made in vain. Now, suppose that this system shall be carried in one glorious mass into the soul of man, filling up the canals of thought, infusing itself through every conviction, embalming both the intelligence and the heart with its power. What then? I will tell you. *Christ is in that soul the hope of glory.* The truths and promises of the Divine Word have gone *inward*—taken their seat upon the throne of thought; they have become the aliment of the mind, and now adorn every apartment with the moral furniture of the Gospel. The mind need not ascend into heaven to bring Christ down, or descend into the deep to bring Him up, for the word of faith, which represents Him, is already there, and through it He is there. The doctrines of the Gospel, through which Christ shines, leaving behind Him a long trail of light, every ray of which is a ray of hope, now constitute the spiritual *tapestry* of the soul. Whether you look into its conviction, or into the Bible, you will find the same things, for these convictions are now the receptacles, the vehicles of the words of eternal wisdom. Blessed man is he who carries this treasure *within* himself; heavenly orthodoxy is that which enthrones Christ, not as an abstraction, but as a Divine Savior, imparting the hope of glory. Brilliant vision, which first enshrines the *personality* of the Savior, and then reviews his attributes, the *essential* and the *official!* This is having the word of Christ dwelling in us "richly in all wisdom." Time may waste, or fires burn up our *paper* creeds; but here is a creed no flame ever touched, whose free and unchained action no prisons ever bound. Misfortune and commercial disaster may cover our earthly heavens with darkness; but here is a hope beyond casualty—itself a great moral cone of glory, its apex lost in the skies. The opening grave may beckon us to our long sleep in the dust, but as we lie down in its damp and silent chamber, Christ, the hope of glory, will tell us to be of good cheer, for in a little season we shall be with Him in His Kingdom.

2. The indwelling of Christ implies those conditions of the *heart*, which are the appointed and proper antecedents of the hope of glory.

I do not suppose that the impenitent possess anything like that *completeness* of view in regard to the scheme of Christian redemption, which belongs to the child of God. They never can possess it while they keep so far from the scheme. In this position no eloquence or argument can preach it with its proper fullness into their intelligence. I suppose, also, that some Christians have immensely better views on this subject than others. It is really painful to see the horrible ignorance of some in reference to that which is to carry them to heaven; it is their fault and their loss—a dishonor to themselves and their religion. No wonder they are so much in the dark, for they do not read, and study, and pray over their Bibles sufficiently, to have the clearest form of light. They

depend too much upon their preacher to give them ideas; these they but half digest, hence they sit in the mere twilight of truth.

While then Christians exceed the impenitent in their conceptions of truth, and some Christians far exceed others in the same department, I must not fail to notify you that Christian experience does not *wholly* consist in the mere apprehension of a theory, however divine, beautiful, or sublime. The religion of him, with whom Christ dwells as the hope of glory, is not *naked* thought, even in the loftiest sphere to which thought ever passed. There is something more in that mind. This I have styled "conditions of the heart," in the proposition just announced. These conditions are implied in the fact of an indwelling Christ. Without designating the *extent* of the exercises, I affirm the following things of every Christian, i. e. that he entirely relies upon the merits of Christ for the salvation of his soul, that his affections are drawn out towards Him in the form of love, and that his character in its essential features is like that of his Savior. These are the conditions of a pious heart, a heart in which Christ dwells; and if we cannot abide this test, our hopes are vain, and should at once be relinquished. He is infinitely worthy of our confidence and love; He is also a perfect model for our imitation; and if in these particulars we totally fail, it is self-deception to imagine that we are His. They are the Biblical terms of discipleship, and must be *realities* in us, or we are not the followers of the Lamb. They are also our exalted privileges, and can never be viewed with aversion, except as we ourselves shall be unholy and sinful. We may perfect our theological theories, as we would polish a literary scheme; we may assemble all the Bishops and Popes of the globe to bless us and baptize us, but without these conditions of the heart, we are strangers to Christ, to the true spirit of that religion He gave to man.

The hearer will now observe, that these spiritual conditions constitute that moral state of human being, which according to the rules of the Gospel, is the proper *antecedent* of a hope of glory. They suppose the subject to be standing in a position where the Gospel cannot *fail* to save him—where God is pledged to save him; indeed they are a part of salvation, salvation from sin to holiness in its early stage. They constitute the individual the friend of Christ, from whose hand no power shall ever be able to pluck him. The plan of God is graciously to pardon, and for ever to justify a soul when in this state, and thus, through Christ, invest it with a title to eternal glory. It is a state of mind, which secures salvation to a certainty, not a mere probability, but an absolute certainty, not on account of its meritorious power, but because it connects the soul with Christ and the scheme of life, which is based upon Him. In one word, it is that condition of the soul which the God of the Gospel has designated, as that without which He never will, and with which He always will, bestow eternal life. The thief on the cross said to the expiring Savior, "Lord, remember

me, when thou comest into thy kingdom." He was answered, "To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise." How quickly the Gospel took effect, and became to that dying thief "the power of God unto salvation." His prayer evinced a proper temper towards Christ; and in an instant the whole energies of the divine scheme encircled him, and his salvation was affirmed by Him, who was then shedding his blood to procure it. Let us have the same temper, and substantially the same promise is ours to-day—*this* moment—at *all* times—in life and in death. How proper it is, that we should always be in this moral state! Christ in worthy of it; it is the only state which can fit us for happiness in a heaven where he reigns. If then it be our state, it is no *presumption* for us to hope, to hope with confidence; not to hope is to do injustice to the Gospel and its promises. The certainty that it is ours, and the certainty of our salvation are always equal to each other.

In view of this train of thought, I ask you to consider the following reflections:—

1. The difficulties which Christians and recent converts experience in regard to their hopes, depend upon one, or all of three causes. They may fail clearly to apprehend the *nature* of hope; they may not distinctly see that it is an exercise of their own minds coming into existence, in certain circumstances. If they in any way *materialize* the term, and then seek for hope, they will of course seek in vain; their very efforts will deepen their own obscurity, and what they seek will always elude their grasp. Hoping is purely a process of the mind, and when the facts are present, which authorize the process, then we are to put forth the exercise, i. e. mentally *do* the work. And if in the light of appropriate facts, the mind refuse to hope, then any labor expended beyond the region of facts to obtain a hope, must necessarily be labor lost. The mind is working at an enormous disadvantage, and the result to which it arrives is more likely to be an optical illusion, than the hope of a Christian, as provided for in the Scriptures. Again, they may fail to apprehend the proper *data*, or Bible grounds for the exercise of hope. These are to be found in the plan of salvation by Jesus Christ, and if the great features of this plan lie obscurely in the understanding, the mind is rendered proportionately incompetent to decide the question, whether it ought to hope or not. Feebleness of spiritual perception enfeebles all exercises, which in the order of nature are consequent thereupon. Strong and life-giving views of Christ, as revealed in the economy of redemption, are essential to strong and powerful hope. He will be to us "the hope of glory" according to the fullness with which He dwells in us. If He dwell in our hearts by faith, if His word dwell in us "richly in all wisdom," if we attain the "riches of the full assurance of the understanding," then surely it cannot be difficult to give to every man that asketh us a reason of the hope that is in us. This high attainment of knowledge is the privilege of him only

who labors to comprehend Christ, as He is made known in the Scriptures. One reason why many Christians hope so feebly, is to be found in the fact, that they know so little of the blessed Savior; and this imperfect knowledge arises from the neglect of God's Holy Word. More study, more mental labor upon the field of revelation would make Christ more precious, by giving the soul a better knowledge of Him; it would increase the *subjective* intensity of all spiritual exercises, by giving a larger and clearer *objective* range to the mind. "The treasures of wisdom and knowledge," which are hid in Christ, are to us of no avail, unless our minds are put in communion with those treasures. They are majestic elements in Him, but efficient in *us*, only as transfered to our apprehensions. If we would hope with power in Christ, we must be filled with the knowledge of Him "in all wisdom and spiritual understanding." If we would have this knowledge, we must make the Bible the *vade mecum* of our lives. This book, properly used, will clarify the pious intelligence, make the heart glow with love, and faith, and hope; it will feed the soul with spiritual manna, and give power to every exercise of the "new man." Its neglect, sinful in itself, is an unconceivable loss in the department of Christian experience. Again, Christians may not treat in a proper manner the question, whether their *piety be genuine*. There is a wide difference betweena strenuous effort to serve Christ and thus be His, and an equally strenuous effort to determine that we are His. In the latter case we are likely to be *selfish*—in the former our motive is benevolent and Christian; in the one case we are looking mostly at ourselves—in the other we are contemplating the will of our Master, and seeking to do it; in the one we are not yielding the fruits of piety, but *searching* for them —in the other we *are* yielding these fruits, and thus giving the best evidence that we are Christians, evidence most likely to be apparent to our own eyes. Deep and ardent piety carries with itself an incidental demonstration of its own existence; its nature is to be *self-luminous;* and, if it be the condition of hope, then the speediest way safely to hope is to develope the condition. Whether we are, or are not Christians is not the *great* question of our lives. He who makes it the *chief* point of thought, resolved to do nothing else until he settles this, will find it in experience the most difficult inquiry that ever engaged his powers. Let him take a wiser course, let his mind survey the requirements and privileges of the Gospel of Christ, let him address his heart with the utmost energy to the life of Christian holiness—this is not only the surest way *to be* a Christian, but also the surest route by which to *discover* the fact. It generates the *evidential* light of piety; it places this light at a point of easy observation; the spiritual eye naturally falls upon it, sees the fact without laborious search; the consciousness of attachment to Christ suggests the reality of union with Him, of safety in His hands, and sweetly unfolds the hope of glory. My brethren, *be* what you wish to discover, and the dis-

covery will become a comparatively simple work; here spend your power, and God will give you light.

2. The characteristic, by which all false hopes may be known, is this, i. e. *they are not preceded by the proper antecedents.* This mistake may be committed in either of two ways.

In the *first* place, the mind in hoping, may build its hope on some other plan besides that of the Gospel. The Apostle assures us, that "other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ." This proposition excludes everything but Christ in the work of the soul's salvation. The religious experience of the Apostle was conformed to this idea; he counted all things loss for "the excellency of the knowledge of Christ;" he depended on nothing else, on no other being. If, therefore, in the exercise of hope, we place our dependence upon anything but Christ, our hope has a *false* antecedent, and is of no value. We may not trust in our own exercises; we have no authority for trusting in the *general* character of God; we must give up all and take Christ as our Divine Savior, or in omitting to do so, we lose the benefit of His salvation. It is enough to secure the condemnation of every other scheme, to know that it is not of God, and is condemned by that which *is* of God. Man may plan; Christ alone can save. Talk not, sinner, of the plausibility of your theory; it has no warrant beyond that which you, a worm of the dust, can give it; you must forsake it, or in keeping it, die with it. You cannot prove its safety in a single item, and the thought that the veto of God is upon it, ought to make you tremble and abandon it. What madness is it in man to put the worthless figments of a dream where God has put His well-beloved Son.

In the *second* place, men may profess to hope in virtue of the Gospel, without accepting and personally appropriating Christ by faith and love. As the Bible reveals but one Savior, so it reveals but *one moral state*, common to all who shall be saved by His blood. We must believe in Him, we must love Him, we must prove both our faith and love by obedience to his commandments; we must appropriate, according to the Gospel rule, the blessing He proposes to give. This a man cannot do, and remain a hardened sinner, or a mere religious formalist. There are exercises, exercises of the *heart*, in whose absence neither the amplitude, nor the power of the atonement will avail for our salvation. These exercises constitute a *spiritual* religion, accurately delineated in the word of God, having its seat and theatre of exhibition in the soul of man, elementary and essential in his preparation for the privileges and joys of the life to come. To secure these, it is appointed that the Gospel shall be preached, and Jehovah sends down the Holy Spirit to give it power in subduing and changing the hearts of men. The promises shine forth—the law thunders with convicting power—the terrible things of eternity are unveiled, that those, who are in controversy with God, may suspend their opposition, and yield to the claims of Christ. If they decline to do this,

then they will not be saved; and more than this, for "the wrath of God abideth on them," and they "shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and the glory of his power." Sinner, Christ *rejected* by you is not "Christ *in* you the hope of glory." He, whom you will not love and serve, to whom you will not commit your soul, for whom you will not forsake all things else, does not permit you to hope in Him. If you hope, while thus treating Him, you hope without His authority—against His warning voice; you hope without that state of heart, which is the appointed antecedent of such an exercise. Look then for a change of your moral posture, while you may; despair of all relief except in Christ. "If sinners entice thee, consent thou not;" if the world allure thee, remember, it is to thy ruin. You can now gain what, when lost, you can never regain. Heaven, through Christ, is fairly within your reach. You have no reasons for losing the prize, which do not argue the deepest guilt. Since Christ has died, you *need* not die, and yet you *may*. Will you have "Christ in you the hope of glory?" Weighty question! Treat it, as you will wish to have done, when on trial at the bar of God.

SERMON CCCCXXX.

MOTIVES TO EARLY PIETY.

Those that seek me early shall find me.—Prov. viii. 17.

The Church of Christ is deeply interested in the character of the rising generation. Its present members are gradually vanishing from the stage, and entering on the recompenses of reward. Their places must be supplied by others, or the church will soon become extinct. To whom must she look for this supply? To those who are now advanced to manhood and old age? She has so long looked in vain, that she can indulge only a faint expectation of any considerable accession from their number. If, however, she was sure of such an accession—yet their heads also will soon be laid in the dust. But there is a generation coming after us, that will live when we are dead. Thirty years hence they will occupy our places on the stage of life, and regulate all the important concerns of man. If the church then exists, it will be composed of those who are now young. If the pure Gospel of Jesus is then preached in Christian or in heathen lands, they must furnish the heralds of salvation. If religion then flourishes, or in the generations which follow them, it will be because great numbers of them are now converted to God. How earnest then, ought to be the prayers and the efforts of the church for the early conversion of the young! It is because I feel in some measure, the deep importance of this subject, as well as a peculiar interest in the salvation of the young in this congregation, that I have chosen this passage of Scripture as my text. It is, my young friends, a message from God addressed immediately to you. It encourages you to seek Him now, in the morning of life, and promises you that if you will, you shall certainly find Him.

I well know that all of you intend to seek Him before you die. Not one of you can endure the thought of going into eternity before you have secured your salvation.

Let me then ask your solemn attention while I urge upon you some of those motives which God has set before you in the Scriptures, to remember your Creator *now* in the days of your youth, before the evil days come, and the years draw nigh in which you will say you have no pleasure in them.

1. God has given you peculiar encouragements to seek Him while you are young.

The offers of salvation are indeed made to all men of all ages; yet God from a regard to His own honor, encourages men to embrace religion in the morning of life. To suppose otherwise, is to suppose that God is willing that men should spend life in dishonoring Him; in injuring His cause, and provoking His anger, and should refuse to love Him and serve Him, until their faculties are decayed, and they can do nothing in his service. Every page in

the sacred volume justifies this conclusion. Why has God required your parents to bring you up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, to instruct and exort you—to warn and reprove you—to give you line upon line, and precept upon precept, and to teach you the truths and duties of religion when you lie down and when you rise up—when you go out and when you come in—in the city and in the field, if He did not intend that you should love Him and obey him in childhood and youth? Why did he require parents publicly to dedicate their children to Him in the ordinances of circumcision and baptism, except to secure the faithful discharge of this important duty. The Scriptures are full of instruction and warnings to the young. The Proverbs of Solomon were written to give subtlety to the simple—to the young man knowledge and discretion.

Ministers are required to exhort young men to be sober-minded, and to fear the Lord in their youth. The encouragements which God has given you to embrace religion early, are presented in many forms. You will find them in various typical representations in the Old Testament. The manna was a type of the bread of life. It could be gathered only in the morning. The Jews were required to offer the *first fruits* of the ground in their oblations and the firstlings of the flocks in sacrifice. It was *early in the morning* that Lot and his family escaped from Sodom. It was *in the morning* that the Israelites went forth from Egypt—that they passed through the Red Sea, and that under Joshua they entered Canaan. All these are typical of the deliverance of the sinner. God speaks the same language in these comparisons by which he illustrates the nature of a religious life. The sinner's first attention to religion is called *putting the hand to the plough.* But if the husbandman does not plough *in season*, he will plough in vain. He calls Christians the *planting* of the Lord. But if seeds are not planted in the spring, there will be no harvest. He compares the church to a vineyard, but if the vines are not set in the vineyard when young, they will bear no fruit. He represents their annexation to the church by the process of *ingrafting;* but if this process is to succeed, a young and tender shoot must be inserted.

The sinner's restoration is compared to healing the sick. But the only hope of success is to send for the physician in the early stages of the disease, before it is seated in the constitution. A religious life is represented by a race. But if the winner was not on the spot in season, and prepared to enter the lists at the commencement of the race, he could have no opportunity of winning the prize. He gives you the same encouragement in numerous examples of early piety.

What bright encomiums are passed on the conduct of Samuel and David—of Obadiah and Isaiah—of Jeremiah and Timothy, because they began to fear the Lord in childhood and youth. Their history is recorded to convince you that God will bless you, if you early embrace religion. He teaches you the same thing in

the form of direct instruction. His language to you is, "Remember *now* thy Creator, in the days of thy youth." You are to do it not only while young, but now, without delay or procrastination. He directs you, "Seek *first* the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you." He teaches you that those who flourish in the courts of our God, are they who are *planted* in the house of the Lord, or who in the morning of life unite themselves to His Church. And in the text he gives you the gracious assurance that they who seek him early shall find him. These are only specimens of the customary language of the Scriptures. They show you how much God has done to persuade you *now* to commence a life of piety.

2. Youth is, for many reasons, incomparably the best time to seek your salvation. It is the season most free from the cares and anxieties of the world. Your parents now provide for your wants and take care of all your interests. An infinitely wise God has so ordered it in his providence that the season of childhood and youth should be comparatively a season of *leisure*, and it would seem for the very purpose of furnishing you, in the beginning of your days, the best and happiest opportunity of seeking his favor. He knew that this ought to be the first, as it is infinitely the most important business of life. He has left you therefore a *vacant space*, not filled up with other business, that it might be devoted to the great one of seeking eternal life. Now you have the best opportunity for reading and prayer, and for seeking God in religious retirement and meditation. If it passes away without improvement, a similar opportunity will never return. I know you fondly imagine that you shall enjoy a still more auspicious season, in manhood and old age. But go and ask those who are advanced in life, and they will tell you that they bitterly lament their having devoted their childhood and youth without securing their salvation. Your minds are now comparatively free from prejudice against the truth of God. The minds of the young are usually fair, and candid, and open to conviction. You have not yet been occupied in perverting the truth of God—in fortifying yourselves against its influence—in justifying your sins, and in persuading yourselves that it is safe to lead a life of impenitence. Your hearts are now less hardened in sin. They are, I well know, sinful by nature; yet the perpetration of sin has a singular and constant tendency to harden the heart. Especially is this true of sins against the clear knowledge of duty and the reproofs of conscience. Those who have grown old in impenitence, I need not say have continued much longer in the practice of sin. They have sinned much oftener, and against a fuller knowledge of their duty, and have more frequently violated the dictates of conscience. They have committed greater and more presumptuous sins. Their perverseness in sin has been far more obdurate. They have resisted more numerous and more solemn warnings—have turned a deaf ear to more invi-

tations of mercy—have violated more solemn resolutions—have oftener perverted those means of grace, and far more dreadfully resisted the Holy Spirit. All these things have directly tended to stupify the conscience and harden the heart.

Though your hearts are by nature equally prone to sin with those of older sinners, you have not like them riveted the habit of sinning. Wicked men, as they advance in life, become so addicted to particular sins by indulgence, that there is no hope of reformation. Look at an old epicure, or miser—at an old libertine, or liar, or devotee of ambition, or at an old worldling of any other class, and you will see a man almost beyond the reach of mercy. It was the knowledge of this fact that led the prophet Jeremiah to ask the solemn and appalling question, "Can the Ethiopean change his skin or the leopard his spots? then may ye that are accustomed to do evil learn to do well." His sinful habits render the reformation of such a man exceedingly difficult, if not impossible.

If at any time he attempts to reform, he is so accustomed to yield to temptation that he violates all his resolutions and promises, and enters anew on the course of transgression. The man who would seek salvation with success, must thoroughly renounce all his sins and deny every lust. This is the stone over which such multitudes stumble and fall. There is not probably a man in this house who has not at some time or other sought reconciliation to God. Yet how few appear to be reconciled. The reason is, they cannot be brought to a thorough reformation. They are so wedded to their sinful indulgences, that they cannot consent entirely to renounce them.

The man who has thoroughly reformed his sinful practices, has advanced a most important step towards salvation. I need not tell you that it is very difficult to break off our sins, even in youth. But it is far more difficult in after life. How much easier to pluck up a tree by the roots when it is a tender sapling, than when it has stood for many years, and sent forth its roots deep and strong into the earth. Your minds also are now more tender and susceptible of deep and powerful impressions. As you advance in sin, your feelings will become more callous, and your unbelief more absolute and hopeless. Look at the aged sinner. The means of grace have been so long used that they have lost their efficacy. He has listened to the terrors of the law until they have ceased to alarm his fears—to the invitations of the Gospel until they no longer rouse his hopes. His heart has become sermon-proof, and the love of a dying Savior no more melts him into tenderness. He has grown bolder in sin, and is less afraid of the wrath of God. Threatenings which once made him tremble, now pass by him like the idle wind. Truths which were once followed by conviction, now hardly excite a momentary attention. He has so often stifled convictions, that there is little prospect they will ever return. If they do, even, they will probably be faint and momentary.

But if persons are to seek salvation in earnest, their convictions

of sin must be deep and thorough. Without this they will seek for many years to enter in at the strait gate, and will not be able. If also you seek the favor of God now, you have far more reason to expect his assistance and blessing. As youth is the time which God has appointed for this very purpose—the time when he has encouraged and commanded you to seek him—you may rationally hope he will aid all your efforts, and the Scriptures assure you that this hope shall not be disappointed. The providence of God confirms this position. Rarely, indeed, if ever, do the young engage in earnest in seeking salvation, but they find it. In how many important respects then is youth the best season you will ever enjoy of gaining eternal life! Can you, then, my *young friends*, waste it in folly and in sin, and thus lose your fairest opportunity of securing glory, honor, and immortality?

3. God has a right to your best services.

He made you—he upholds you—he blesses you—he is always doing you good. Your daily bread and your daily raiment—the ground on which you tread, and the air which you breathe—the heat which warms you and the light by which you see, reminds you continually of his unmerited goodness. And when your sins deserved his anger, he spared not his only begotten Son, but freely gave him up to die, that you might have life through his blood. What stronger claims then can exist? What stronger obligations can you conceive of, to bind you to his service? But what is the return that he asks for these infinite blessings? He requires no sacrifice but that of sin and the misery which follows it; no service but the promotion of your own highest welfare for time and for eternity. He asks you to escape from hell and choose the way to heaven. If you *comply*, He will gain nothing. *You* will not make *Him* richer, more powerful or happy. The gain will all be your own. It will be the final salvation of your immortal souls. Has not this great Being a right then to this return? Is it an unreasonable request, when he asks you to choose life rather than death, and heaven rather than hell; an unwarrantable demand, when he requires you to love him with all the heart? Is it not right that he should claim this return *now*, in the morning of life—that you should devote your youth and manhood, as well as your old age to his service? Do not infinite obligations press you, this very day to yield him your hearts? But suppose you were certain that after a life of sin and impenitence, you should repent on a dying bed; are you of so base and unworthy a spirit—so lost to all that is generous and dignified in character, as to be willing to make such a return to your great Benefactor? Do you wish to spend life in dishonoring God, and provoking his anger, and when your faculties are worn out, and your services are good for nothing, then to go and offer them to him, who led a life of toil and suffering, and died an accursed death for you? Is this the way, my young friends, in which the love of Christ constrains you

to live for him who died for you, and rose again? How much more honorable to dedicate yourselves *now* to his service! If you do, you will avoid the life of sin and impenitence by which others corrupt and debase themselves, and provoke his anger. You will consecrate to God your best faculties—the activity and ardor of youth—the vigor of manhood, and the wisdom and experience of age. In this way you will spend your whole being in his service, and secure the great act of your being.

4. Let me urge upon you the happiness you will secure by having God your friend.

If God is your friend, you will be at peace with him, and he will love you. He will relieve your wants, console your sorrows, and cause all things to work together for your good. Have you ever reflected how delightful it will be to have such a Friend in your progress through this miserable world? He is a Friend who is ever willing to hear your complaints, and to bear your afflictions. He will know not only your external sorrows, but the inmost troubles of the heart—the smart of conscience, or the pangs of a wounded spirit. Other friends, if they know your troubles, may be unable to relieve them. But no circumstances can be so calamitous—no misery so extreme, but his arm can relieve you of the burden, and convert your sorrow into joy.

At all times and in all situations he can give you the oil of joy for mourning, and the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness. Other friends, if able and willing, may not be present to relieve you in the hour of your calamity. But God will always be with you, a very present help in time of trouble. Are you awake or asleep, at home or abroad, on the land or on the ocean, in sickness or in health, His ear is always open to hear; His hand is always extended to bless. In seasons of solitude and darkness, when no other friend is nigh to help you, he will be conscious of your danger, and afford you effectual relief. Other friends may be separated from you by death, or if they live may prove unfaithful. But God will live for ever; and while he lives, will be your faithful and unchanging friend.

In the text he this day offers you his friendship. "I love them that love me, and they that seek me early shall find me." Now, while you are walking in the slippery paths of youth, surrounded by a thousand temptations and dangers, he reaches out his hand, and offers to guide and support you on your way through this wilderness of sin and sorrow. How happy—how inconceivably happy, if you can make use of this Almighty Friend! He will know all your wants, and pity your infirmities. He will attend you in all your ways, and lead you safe through every evil. His eye will watch your wanderings, and his ear listen to all your complaints. In all the miseries which contempt, and malice, and envy may inflict upon you, he will protect and deliver you. In that hour when heart and flesh fail, you shall fear no evil, for his rod and his staff shall comfort you.

5. Let me urge upon you the danger of delay.

The delay of repentance is dangerous in two respects. The aversion to repent increases, and life is uncertain.

Impressions made on the youthful mind are usually strong and lasting. From these strong impressions, successively made, the character is formed. Before this is done, the mind is easily moulded into any shape. Afterwards it cannot without difficulty be altered. Hence, the young are deeply interested to guard against sinful habits and to obtain those that are virtuous: that in the one case they may avoid the danger, and in the other enjoy the benefits of those deep and durable impressions. I know you intend, after enjoying the pleasures which the world has to bestow, at some future, happier period, to begin a renovation of life. If not before; yet when palsied by age or wasted by sickness, you will enter on the path to Heaven. Alas! you are yet to learn, and perhaps by fatal experience, that neither age nor sickness are the seasons for amendment. Go to the sick-bed of the sinner, and if his mind is neither torpid nor delirious by disease, you will usually see nothing but a dull, stupid indifference, mistaken perhaps for resignation or the horrors of despair. Are you calculating upon repentance in old age?

Is this the advice of God in the text?

Look too, at the aged sinner! The less he needs or can enjoy his earthly possession the more he loves them. Death is indeed nigher than in youth; but he does not realize his approach. *He* feels as sure of a year to come as *you* do *now* in the bloom of youth. And a year he thinks is long enough to complete the work of repentance. Thus he has always felt and acted, and thus he will continue to feel and act, until death cuts short his probation and closes the scene for ever. But why do you expect to repent in *old age?* You feel unwilling to begin that repentance now. Will you be *less* so as you grow older in iniquity? Will a life of sin prepare you for repentance? Will the strength of your evil affections and habits make it easier for you to turn to God? Why not now reform? Is it not because your love of the world and of sin is so strong that you cannot give it up? How then can you expect to relinquish it more unwillingly when that attachment is ten-fold stronger? As well might the drunkard hope for sobriety by another year's devotion to his cups. But are you sure that you shall live to old age; or that if you leave the world at an earlier period, a lingering sickness will give you this opportunity of repentance? Look around you and see how many of your former acquaintances are already slumbering in the grave. Go to yonder burying ground, and there number the dwellings of the dead. See what multitudes younger, or of the same age with you, inhabit those solitary mansions. Are *you* better than *they*; that you expect to become old and lay down your hoary head on the bed of death? Is it because you are purposing to grow old, to lead a life of sin, that you think God will spare you? How much rather ought you to fear that hitherto he has only endured you as rebels of wrath fitted for destruction.

Has God given you any *assurance* of your life? Has he told you, even that when yonder sun shall next rise in the east, he shall find you among the living? His language to you is, "Boast not thyself of to-morrow, for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth." Has he promised you that he will apprise you in season of the approach of death; and that during a lingering sickness his Spirit shall strive with you and bring you to repentance? Does he tell you that if you refuse his calls and disregard his invitations, and set at nought his counsels and despise his reproofs, he will not laugh at your calamity, or mock when your fear cometh; that when *you* call *he* will answer, and when you earnestly seek him you *shall* find him, because you hated knowledge and did not choose the fear of the Lord?

6. A distinguished place in Heaven is the certain reward of early piety.

The happiness of all who arrive in Heaven will be perfect; but the Scriptures teach us that the *degrees* of happiness will be very different. They command you *to lay up treasures* in heaven, because your treasure there may be indefinitely increased. They teach you that the righteous will be rewarded *according* to their works, that is, that their works will be the *measure* of their reward.

They assure you that in the resurrection, the saints will differ widely in their degrees of glory and happiness. There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars. One star also differs from another star in glory: *So also shall it be in the resurrection of the dead.* Every person, therefore, who has done great good to mankind, who has attained high degrees of grace and holiness, and who has approached nearer to the measure of stature of a perfect man in Christ Jesus, may expect to receive peculiar emanations of the Divine favor, and to shine with singular glory through the ages of eternity. And who are so likely to do all these things as they who commence a life of piety; who at this early period begin to tread the paths of wisdom and become the friends of the Most High. These will have the fairest opportunities to make great progress in the Divine life, and to show themselves vessels of honor, fitted for their Master's use. They will have much the longest time to serve God—to do good to man and to grow in holiness. None, therefore, stand so fair a chance of becoming eminent in piety here, or of shining with such distinguished lustre in Heaven. This is an ambition worthy of an immortal mind.

These are blessings, noble in their character, and lasting as eternity. This is the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus —the glorious reward which God himself proposes to early piety. Let it not then be said that you whose names may be enrolled with saints and angels, are contented to confine your views to this narrow life. Despise the unreal honors of this world, and let the end of all your actions be to become "Sons and Kings and Priests unto God."

Has God given you many and glorious encouragements to seek him in the morning of life? Is youth for many reasons, the best time you will ever enjoy to obtain salvation? Would you render to your Great Benefactor that return of gratitude and love which is due for his overflowing goodness. Would you wish an omnipresent, an infinitely wise, powerful, and faithful friend to be always with you, and to bless you as you are traveling the journey of life? Does the hope of your recovery grow fainter as you advance in sin; and are you uncertain of what a day may bring forth? Would you, finally, rise to immortal happiness and shine with distinguished glory in the church of the first-born? Let me beseech you, *this very day*, to enter on the work of salvation. Go to the Savior whose cross you have hitherto despised. Lay yourselves at his feet in the humble confession of your sins, and plead his blood for the pardon of them all. Offer him your *hearts*, and with them all that you have, and are, and shall be, for time and for eternity. Acknowledge—confess him publicly to be *your* Savior by a life of holy devotion to his service, and *he* will confess *you* to be his sincere and faithful disciples, when he shall come in the glory of the Father and with all his holy angels.

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PREACHED BEFORE THE AMERICAN BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS FOR FOREIGN MISSIONS, AT NEW HAVEN, CONN., SEPT. 8, 1846.

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THE HELP OF THE LORD, THE SEAL OF THE MISSIONARY WORK

Hitherto the Lord hath helped us.—1 Samuel, vii. 12.

Thirty-six years ago, on the fifth of the present month, five grave and venerable looking men met by appointment in the private parlor of a Connecticut pastor.* They were men of large minds, of devoted hearts, and of great wisdom and energy in devising and executing plans of Christian benevolence. They constituted the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions. They had been appointed to their office the preceding June, by the General Association of Massachusetts, and were now met, for the first time, to organize the Board and devise ways and means for carrying out the great object of their appointment. One of that number still survives;† the others have gone to their reward on high. Their meeting attracted but little notice. They had come together, three from Massachusetts, and two from Connecticut, to consult on a subject respecting which the community then felt but little interest, and had but little knowledge. They were without funds, without a single missionary in the field, without experience, and, in so far as this country was concerned, without precedents to guide them in their deliberations.—Added to all, how the public would regard the enterprise in which they were engaged, was wholly problematical. Like the disciples of old, in that upper room in Jerusalem, they had a mighty work to accomplish, but the means of its accomplishment were yet to be made known to them. But strong in faith, and relying on God for help,

* Rev. Dr. Porter, Farmington. † Rev. Dr. Chapin, Wethersfield

they entered upon the great work which had been assigned to them, formed their plan of operations, appealed to the Christian public for aid, and the work went forward far beyond their most sanguine hopes. Taking our position at this point, let us, Brethren and Friends, briefly review the dealings of God with the Board, and the missions established under its patronage during the period of its operations, and, if I mistake not, we shall find occasion, at every stage of the review, to take up the language of the text, and say, "Hitherto the Lord hath helped us." And,

1. This is true in respect to a vast enlargement of the accessible field of missions. At the commencement of the period under review, but a comparatively few spots on the globe were open to missionary operations. The great empire of China was hermetrically sealed against Christian light and influence. The dark continent of Africa was very little known, covered over by a dense cloud through which scarcely a ray of light, from any source, had penetrated. The London Missionary Society had, indeed, a few years before, commenced operations in South Africa. But its missions encountered violent opposition, were repeatedly broken up, and had for a long time to struggle for existence. At Tahiti, the mission established there by the London Society, was almost extinct, owing to the bloody insurrections and wars among the natives. In Hindoostan, though under British power, so great was the jealousy of the government in regard to missionary influence, that even the missionaries, who had been sent out from England, were tolerated only with the greatest difficulty, and when the first missionaries of this Board arrived in the country, they were at once ordered to depart; they fled to Bombay; orders to leave followed them there; and it was only after a long controversy with the local authorities, and encountering innumerable reverses and discouragements, that they were permitted to remain on mere sufferance. This was thirty-three years ago, last February. How changed the state of the world now, in regard to being accessible to Christian influence! Instead of being obliged to ask, as were the founders of our Board, with great solicitude, where *can* we send missionaries, we may rather ask, where can we not send them? The world, which is the great field of missions, has been surveyed in well nigh all its parts; and the portions of it now perfectly open to the bearers of the Gospel message are large enough to exhaust the resources of all christendom for many years to come. China, with her three hundred and fifty millions of people, is open, and the decree of the Emperor has gone forth, for the free toleration of Christianity in his dominions. Hindoostan, with her one hundred and forty millions of souls, is as free of access as our own country. The same may be said of the islands of the Pacific, of Australasia, and of many large and thickly populated portions of Africa. Even in Turkey, where but a few years since a Christian missionary could not go, without incurring certain death, or the most imminent risk of it, the rights of conscience are

now recognized, and the sword of persecution sheathed. Mohammedans may change their religion and no longer be exposed to decapitation;* and the persecutions to which our Armenian brethren were subjected during the last winter, have, in the wonder-working providence of God, resulted in securing for them religious freedom, which, we may hope, will be extended throughout Syria, and all the dependencies of the Ottoman empire.

Thus God has been opening the way all over the globe for the going forth of his truth to the conquest of the nations. There are, at this moment, not less than five hundred millions of souls, to whom, so far as freedom of access is concerned, we might carry the gospel to-morrow, and who are now perishing for lack of vision. Had this been predicted thirty-six years ago, it would have been deemed utterly incredible, and the friends of the missionary cause would have said, "If the Lord would make windows in heaven, then this thing might be." But the thing is done, and in consequence, the state of the world may now be said to be very similar to that of the Roman empire at the period of the planting of Christianity. Roads had been cut into all parts of the empire, radiating in every direction from the capital, over which the Apostles and first preachers of the gospel might travel with ease and safety, as they went forth to bear the messages of salvation to remote tribes and nations of men. So it is now, only in a higher and far more perfect sense. Most surprisingly in these latter days has God, in his providence, been removing the barriers which formerly separated the nations from each other, and has opened up high-ways by land and sea, whereby the heralds of his grace may fly abroad, as on the wings of the wind, bearing their messages of love to earth's remotest bounds. In consequence of the extension of commerce and the vast increase of intercourse among the nations, consulates and embassies have been established by Christian powers, in all the important ports and countries on the globe; and this is often a great source of safety and assistance to the missionary in the prosecution of his work,—an advantage but little known or enjoyed, only a few years since. Thus true is it, that the Lord hath helped us in opening before us new and greatly enlarged fields of missions.

2. This is equally true in regard to a vast increase of the missionary spirit. It is an interesting fact that our country, especially this northern portion of it, was planted in the spirit of missions. One great design of our fathers in coming here was to build up the kingdom of Christ in these ends of the earth, and gather the natives into the fold of Christ. And there has never been a time from that day to the present, when the spirit of missions was not alive and active in the bosoms of many of the friends of the Savior,

* An arrangement to this effect was made some two years since, chiefly through the agency of Sir Stratford Canning, British Embassador at Constantinople. It had special reference to that class of Mohammedans, who, having renounced Christianity, might wish to return to their former faith. It is believed, however, that the arrangement is, in fact, or will be made by construction, applicable to the whole body of Mussulmen.

prompting them to sacrifices and efforts for the salvation of the heathen in the land, equal, at least, to any made in our day. Still it was not until the formation of the Board that anything was done in the way of sending the Gospel to the heathen abroad. The spirit of home missions had a few years previous been rising in the churches, and several societies had been formed in different sections of the country for the purpose of sending missionaries to our destitute new settlements. This naturally awakened concern in the minds of the benevolent for the benighted heathen; and individuals, here and there, began to inquire whether something might not, and ought not to be done for their salvation. But no *general* interest was felt on the subject. It was the day of small things. Many regarded the enterprise of a foreign mission as chimerical, many openly opposed it on various grounds; and through prejudice or want of information, it found favor only with a comparatively few. And when it was, at length, resolved by the Board, to attempt a mission in some part of the heathen world, so great was the doubt whether the Christian community would furnish means to sustain the undertaking, that it was deemed expedient to send one of the four young men, who had been accepted as missionaries, to England, to ascertain "whether their support, in whole or in part, at least for a season, might not be derived from the London Missionary Society."

How different the state of things now? From the time of the organization of the Board till the present hour, the spirit of missions has been steadily on the advance. It has pervaded all denominations of Christians in the land, and has organized them for the great purpose of spreading the Gospel through the world. There is nothing sudden, enthusiastic, or ephemeral in the rise and progress of this spirit. It is calm, deliberate, intelligent and decided. It is generous, self-denying, self-sacrificing. It has every mark of an heavenly origin, and it has been gradually bringing the whole Christian community under a deep-seated, practical conviction, that the Gospel of the grace of God ought to be published with the least possible delay, to all mankind. This is now coming to be the settled persuasion of all who call themselves Christians; and it is not easy for any one to establish his claim to a Christian character who does not acknowledge his obligation to bear a part in the evangelization of the world.

"Mark how this spirit of missions pervades the Christian literature of the day; how it mingles itself with the very elements of instruction in the sabbath-school and by the fire-side; how it speaks from the pulpit in the voice of every minister of the word; how it breathes in the prayers of myriads in the closet, in the family, and in the praying circle; how it goes forth with unwearied step, gathering funds from all classes of people in all parts of the land, and operating everywhere and in every form, to carry out the last command of the Savior, to preach the Gospel to every creature."

It is this spirit which has given rise to so many benevolent societies in our day, and is supplying them so generously with the means of usefulness. It is this spirit which has raised the funds of the Board from hundreds to hundreds of thousands of dollars; which has so much multiplied its missions and its missionaries; which has drawn around it so strongly the affections, the prayers, and the co-operation of the friends of Christ, and awakened such exalted hopes, as to the agency it is destined to exert in bringing on the latter-day glory of the church. Surely, in all this, we cannot but gratefully recognise the hand of God. The spirit of missions, which now so widely and so efficiently pervades the Christian community, is of his own inspiring, and by his help it will continue to spread and to increase in activity and power, till the entire resources of christendom, so far as needed, shall be called forth in the world's conversion. The progress of the spirit of missions, so remarkable in our country, has not been less so in Great Britain and other Protestant lands. The Baptist mission to India, established in 1792, began with a subscription of only 13*l.* 2*s.* 6*d.* When the yearly income of the society had risen to 1500*l.*, Andrew Fuller said he did not doubt that it would, in the course of time, reach 5000*l.* Dr. Bogue, one of the founders of the London Missionary Society, said, when it had an income of 5000*l.*, he did not doubt that one day, as the consummation of faith and exertion, the annual income of the society would be 20,000*l.* The yearly income of the Baptist Society has risen to 26,000*l.*, or nearly 130,000 dollars, and that of the London Society to the sum of 80,000*l.*, or 400,000 dollars. There has been a corresponding increase in the resources of the other great missionary societies, both in England and on the continent. The British Wesleyan Missionary Society expends nearly half a million of dollars a year in the cause of missions, and the Church Missionary Society about the same sum. It is estimated that at least two millions and a half of dollars are annually expended in advancing this great cause, by the various Protestant societies in christendom. All this is the fruit of the spirit of missions, which has grown up chiefly within the last fifty years. Surely, we must say, in view of all these co-operating agencies, "Hitherto the Lord hath helped us." He has shown in a most striking manner, that the silver and the gold are his, and at his pleasure he can allay prejudice, silence opposition, remove objections, and open the hearts and the hands of the rich and the poor to contribute of their substance to aid in spreading his Gospel over the world.

3. We shall have still further evidence of the continued help of the Lord, if we advert for a moment to the wise and successful manner in which the concerns of the Board have been conducted. Bating the imperfections common to all benevolent associations, conducted by fallible men, we venture to claim for this institution such a measure of wisdom, disinterestedness and efficiency in its spirit, policy, and plans of operation, as justly challenges univer-

sal confidence and support. Its founders were among the most intelligent, calm-minded and devotedly Christian men of their day. No one can read the history of the measures adopted by them, in the establishment of the Board, and in its early operations, without feeling that they were indeed guided by wisdom from above. And from the first, the Board has been favored with the counsels of men eminently qualified by Christian principle, and by their established character and influence, to give a wise and efficient direction to the affairs of a great institution. The four Secretaries who have departed this life, Worcester, Evarts, Cornelius and Wisner, were known to many present; and you will not think that I give them undue praise, when I say that the church has been blessed with very few wiser or better men. Of their successors in office, it is enough to say, that they are every way worthy of the high confidence reposed in them by the Christian community. In the Prudential Committee, who manage the immediate executive concerns of the Board, there have always been men of high standing in society, alike distinguished for their talents, and for their sound business habits. In performing the arduous and difficult duties committed to them, they have deeply felt their responsibility to God, and the Christian community; they have prayed much for divine light and guidance, and wisdom from on high, I fully believe, has been imparted to them in no ordinary measure. It is owing to this, I doubt not, that they have been enabled so to manage the concerns of the Board as to secure for it the growing confidence and affection of the churches. Hence the deep sympathy felt by the community in the operations of the Board. Hence the readiness with which its appeals for aid have been responded to, in difficult and trying emergences. Such emergences, unforeseen and beyond the control of human wisdom have several times arisen in the history of the Board; but they have been nobly and generously met by its friends, who have thus evinced their love to the cause, and their confidence in those who are entrusted with its special management.

The continued help of the Lord is still further to be acknowledged, in that he has raised up a succession of able and faithful missionaries, whom he has disposed to devote their lives to his service among the heathen. The time has never been since the organization of the Board, when young men of talents and piety were not ready to meet the call of duty, and give themselves to the sacred cause of missions. Many who have thus been employed, stood high in their own country, for their talents and scholarship, and might, had they been disposed to remain at home, have commanded a settlement in any of the most eligible churches in the land. But the love of Christ bore them away to other fields of labor; they counted not their lives dear to them, so that they might bear the tidings of salvation to those perishing amid the darkness and miseries of paganism. Some of them have laid their bones in Asia, in Africa, in the islands of the sea, or among the

wild men of our own forests. Others still toil on in the service of their Lord, cheerfully wearing out in the cause to which they have devoted their lives.

Among so large a number of missionaries as have been employed by our Board, there must, of course, be a diversity of gifts and qualifications; but the testimony is uniform and full, coming from scientific travellers and distinguished laymen residing on the ground, and from the missionaries, and directors of missionary societies abroad, that no abler or more devoted missionaries are any where to be found, than those who have been sent forth from the American churches. I have had some opportunity to know, and this testimony I believe to be true, and it is just cause of thanksgiving to God, that he has raised up, and sent forth so many of our ablest and most devoted young men as laborers in the foreign field.

Another thing I may mention in this connection as clearly indicating the helping hand of God. It is this,—no essential difference of opinion, no matter of controversy or dispute, or disunion, has ever been allowed to disturb the deliberations of the Committee at "the Rooms," or of the Board at its annual meetings. On the contrary, these meetings have uniformly been characterized by great harmony of sentiment and feeling, and often have been pervaded in an eminent degree by the spirit and presence of God, and those who have attended them, have felt that it was indeed good to be there. May the presence of the divine Savior be vouchsafed to us in the present meeting, and all in attendance receive a fresh baptism from the God of missions.

4. If we consider next the success which has attended the operations of the Board, the actual results of the missions under its direction, we shall have still more striking evidence of the fact that "hitherto the Lord hath helped us." Here, a broad field opens before us, which we can now but very imperfectly survey. A slight view however may suffice to convince us that our labor in sending the Gospel to the heathen, far from being in vain, has been crowned with very marked success.

In coming to a just estimate in relation to this subject, it should be borne in mind, that the first years of a missionary's life are, of necessity, years of preparation. He has to learn the language of the people to whom he has been sent—a barbarous unwritten language, it may be; he has to acquaint himself with their manners and opinions; to overcome their prejudices; to gain their confidence; to make them understand the nature and design of his mission; to prepare elementary books and translate the Scriptures for their use. This, and much more like this, is all preparatory work; it is breaking up the ground and casting in the seed, and a great deal of time and labor is necessarily expended in this way, before any fruit can be gathered. And this is, in fact, the work in which most of our missionaries have been employed a considerable part of the time they have been on the field. It is only within a comparatively recent period, that the way has at all been prepared for

the realization of results. Accordingly, it is a fact, that the success of our missions, estimated by the number of conversions, has been more than twelve times as great during the last ten years, as it was in the whole previous twenty-six years of the Board's history. Ten years ago there were about two thousand members of our mission churches; now there are twenty-four thousand eight hundred and twenty-four.

It should be recollected, too, that the effects of missions are far from being confined to the fields where they are established. There is a reflex influence on the churches at home, of the most important kind, imparting health and activity to their piety, and securing the frequent and copious effusions of God's spirit in revivals. No greater calamity, I am sure, could befall our churches, than the suspension or breaking up of our foreign missions. It may seem a solecism, but I speak sober truth, when I say, we can by no means *afford* to be relieved from the expense of supporting these missions. Our poorest churches and the poorest members in them cannot afford to be thus relieved. The spirit of missions departing from our churches would be like the departure from them of the Spirit of God. They would become dead, fruitless bodies, or exist only as worldly associations, diffusing around nought but an influence to mislead, corrupt and destroy.

The fact has often been noticed, and it is one of serious instruction, as well as of grateful and encouraging import, that religion at home, has prospered very much in proportion to the interest which has been felt in the cause of missions. And certain it is, that revivals of religion have never been more numerous and powerful and our churches have never, on the whole, been in a more vigorous and flourishing state, than since the spirit of missions began to pervade the Christian community, and to wake up thought and feeling in behalf of the spiritually destitute, whether at home or abroad. Has not the experience of our churches, I ask, during the last thirty or forty years, been in happy accordance with the inspired declaration, "They that water, shall also themselves be watered; they that sow plentifully, shall also reap plentifully?"

But let us notice a few facts. Look back to the period of the organization of this Board. I need not stop here to remind you of the many great benevolent societies, of various names and of different denominations, that have since been organized, all, I think, quickened into being and aided in their plans of operation by the example of this Board of Missions. Think of what this Board was when it first rose into being, and of what it is now; think of its four missionaries then, now multiplied to 134, and including assistant female missionaries, native teachers and preachers, with physicians, and others employed in the work of missions, raising the number to 492; think of its one station then, now multiplied to 93, in various and widely distant parts of the heathen world—each having several preaching stations around and belonging to it—centres of heavenly light and influence to the surrounding regions

of darkness; think of its versions of the Scriptures and other books into twenty-three languages and dialects of the heathen world, and of the fifteen printing establishments connected with its missions, with fonts of type and preparations to print in thirty-two different languages; think of its seventy-three churches, embracing 21,824 members; of its seven seminaries for educati ig native preachers and teachers, having 487 pupils, and its 34 boarding schools, with 1,387 pupils, making in all 1,874 boarding scholars; and of its 602 free schools with 29,171 pupils, raising the whole number of youth, in a course of Christian education, to 31,045; think how, when it commenced its work, it was without funds, and all was to be begun; now its income is over 260,000 dollars; while the light of large experience and bright hope shines on its path; how, for several years, it was accustomed to meet in a private room for the transaction of its annual business; now the largest edifice is not sufficient to accommodate those who attend the sacred convocations, to hear of its success, and unite in its services and counsels; think of all this in relation to the future, especially in regard to the circulation of the Scriptures, the instruction of the young, and the raising up of native missionaries, together with the countless silent, yet powerful influences that emanate from Christian missions, all operating to plant the seeds of future civilization, to elevate, purify and bless the state of society where they exist;—put all these things together, and view them in their results in eternity, countless multitudes of immortal beings raised from the degradation and miseries of sin to immortal life and blessedness in heaven,—then say, whether the cost has been too great for the good realized, and whether there is not in the effects of our missions, in the fruits actually gathered from them, the most encouraging evidence that "the Lord hath hitherto helped us," in this great and blessed work.

The view thus presented is of course very general, a mere outline, and must therefore fail of giving anything like an adequate idea of the good, of various kinds, which has been accomplished through the instrumentality of our missions. Could we descend to particulars, review the history of each mission, and call up the thousand incidental blessings, which, in consequence of missionary effort, have fallen upon individuals and families and communities, diffusing intelligence, purity, comfort, freedom and hope, where before nought was seen but ignorance, debasement, oppression and despair; there is not a Christian here, I am sure, who would not exult, with grateful joy, at the sight, and bind himself with new nterest and devotion to a cause so manifestly approved and blessed of God.

5. There is another most interesting topic on which I might easily enlarge: it is the increasing facilities and continually brightening prospects which God is holding out to cheer and help us on in this great and good work. But I must dismiss it with a passing word.

The spirit of missions is the spirit of Christ. It brought him into our world on the great errand of its salvation. He breathed it into his apostles, when, at his ascension, he gave them command to go into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature. And the measure of it which has been shed down upon the church in these latter days, is but the pledge of a more plentiful effusion—the precursor of a brighter and more blessed day, soon to rise upon the world. What God has begun, and has hitherto so signally helped forward by his power and grace, he will not forsake, but will bear on the work thus commenced to triumphant success over all the earth. The machinery, if I may so call it, by which this dark and miserable world is to be raised to holiness and God, is already in operation. 'Its many wheels are beginning to revolve, and a complicated, widely extended movement, continually accelerated by fresh impulses, is bearing along the world from its wintry and torpid position, and bringing it under the influence of serener heavens and an awakening spring. All the genial powers of nature and grace, of science and art, are being unlocked and the better feelings that have long slumbered in the breast of man, are rising into life and activity.' Viewed in the light of God's Word and providence, the future presents brighter visions, and holds out more animating motives to engage and quicken us in the great work of giving the Gospel to the whole world, than were ever afforded to any who have lived before us. It is *the* work to which God is especially calling the whole church at this day; and blessed are they, who, encouraged and strengthened by his help, engage, at his call, in the holy enterprise of filling this world with the knowledge and glory of his great name.

And now, brethren and friends, what lessons, in review of our subject, may we gather up to be impressed on our minds?

1. The first which suggests itself, and which, I doubt not, you have anticipated, is a lesson of gratitude to the great Lord of missions. How different the situation in which we meet this evening from that occupied by the founders of this Board, thirty-six years ago? Its friends were then few; its destined field of labor unknown and unexplored; its funds yet to be collected; the spirit of missions yet to be roused, if not created in the public mind; nay, the whole great work was to be begun, and that without experience, and in the face of great indifference, unbelief and opposition. How surprising the alteration since that day? The accessible field of missions vastly enlarged, including well nigh the whole world; the spirit of missions widely diffused and increasingly active; large experience gathered from being exercised in the work; the helping hand of God attending our efforts in the most encouraging manner, and brighter prospects continually opening before us;—we meet here to transact the annual business of the Board, cheered on in our great enterprise by the co-operation and prayers of hundreds of thousands of warm-hearted and devoted friends of the missionary cause. Surely, here is matter of gratitude, if aught on earth should inspire gratitude.

Some, who have embarked in this enterprise, may feel disappointed that no more has been done. But such, I am sure, have never duly counted the cost of the undertaking. In the warmth of their feelings, or governed more by fancy than by reason, they may have imagined that a few years of effort and a few thousand dollars expended, would suffice to demolish the strong holds of heathenism and convert the world to God. But no intelligent Christian can have entertained such a view as this of the work of missions. It is a great work, far the greatest and most difficult ever undertaken by man. Instead of wondering that so little has been done towards its accomplishment, we have reason rather to be surprised, in view of the scantiness and feebleness of the means used, that so much has been done. If we review the past, in the exercise of a sober, Christian judgment, we cannot but feel that God has done, exceeding abundantly, above all that we had it in our hearts to ask, or even think. He has been beforehand with us in all our labors to advance this cause, preparing the way, and crowning effort with unexpected success. And in view of the numerous interpositions of his providence and grace in favor of the cause, which we, with our fellow-christians, have humbly endeavored to promote, it becomes us to be deeply and continually grateful.

Nor should any be unbelieving or backward to see and acknowledge the helping hand of God, which has been so signally manifested in the past history of the Board. It were easy to point out failures in particular instances, or to charge individual missions with mismanagement, and even the measures of the Board, as not having been in all cases, the wisest and best possible. But surely, such things, even should they be true, incidental as they are to all the undertakings of imperfect men, should not blind our eyes to the many tokens of God's favor vouchsafed to the Board, nor prevent our rendering to him our tribute of thanksgiving for the great good which he has been pleased to accomplish through its instrumentality.

I cannot think it either right or Christian to maintain the posture of complaint and fault-finding in relation to a great and good cause, which is manifestly owned and blessed of God, simply for the reason that it is not, in all respects, conducted in what we deem the best manner. *I* could not take such a posture, without being reminded, and that, too, with no very easy or pleasant feelings, of the counsel of Gamaliel, given to his friends on a certain occasion, "And now I say unto you, Refrain from these men, and let them alone; for if this counsel or this work be of men, it will come to nought; but if it be of God, ye cannot overthrow it, lest haply ye be found to fight against God."

The warmest friends of the Board do not claim for it, exemption from all mistake and error; this were to suppose its affairs to be conducted by angels and not by men; nor do we, by any means, wish its proceedings to be screened from the watchful eye and the kind supervision of its friends and patrons. The safety and effi-

ciency of the Board greatly depend upon such friendly inspection of its doings; and those who conduct its immediate concerns, far from shunning such inspection, earnestly invite it, and are thankful for it. It is a great fellowship of labor and responsibility in which we are engaged; and if God helps us in this work, notwithstanding the imperfections of our poor services, let us thank him for his help, and, unitedly going forward in his work, striving to make what we do in promoting it more perfect in time to come. It were certainly much more in unison with the spirit of the gospel, as it would doubtless tend much more to our own edification and comfort, to acknowledge God's hand in helping forward the cause in which we are engaged, and to thank and praise his name for the good he is doing by it, than to dwell upon alleged imperfections, or maintain a posture of unbelief, of fault-finding, and crimination. If, in our view, there are imperfections and errors in the policy and management of this great and good cause, far from deserting the cause itself, or making war against it on that account, we should bear and forbear, and patiently and kindly wait, and use the proper means for their correction. Good men have here no interest to serve but that of the common cause of missions, the cause of God and human salvation; and while it may be expected of good men, that they will candidly listen to the suggestions of those who are professedly engaged in the same cause with themselves, it may be expected of them, at least, with equal confidence, that they will not be diverted from a course, in relation to this cause, which they believe to be right, and which they see is manifestly approved of God.

2. Let us learn from our subject a lesson of duty. A great work is going forward in our day, the work of evangelizing the world. This work has upon it the high seal of heaven. It is in fulfilment of the great design of our Savior's mediation; it is in obedience to his last command, and it involves the eternal destiny of earth's unevangelized millions. This work—I mean the portion of it committed to this Board—was commenced by our fathers, who now rest from their labors. It has passed into our hands, and we are called to carry it forward, to the utmost extent of our power, during our brief day of responsibility and toil; and then, in our turn, committing it to those who survive us, go with our fathers to the rewards which they enjoy in heaven.

The very help which God has hitherto afforded in the prosecution of this work, devolves upon us new and more pressing duties. The seed, which for many long years was being sown, with wearisome toil and much prayer, has began to spring up, and the fields are white unto the harvest. It is ours to enter in and reap the harvest, and gather fruit unto eternal life; that so it may be fulfilled in us, as in the apostles of old, that they who sowed, and we who reap, shall rejoice together. If we fail to do this; in other words, if we fail to sustain and strengthen our missions by the increased help which is demanded, by the fact that God has so greatly

prospered them, then shall we lose the fruits of past labors, and fields placed under hopeful cultivation, and beginning to smile with moral verdure and beauty, must be abandoned, and turned back to barrenness and desolation.

The missionary work, it should ever be borne in mind, is necessarily a cumulative work. The success of one year creates a demand for more work to be done the next year. And surely, because God helps us in our work, blesses our missions, and so increases our labors and responsibilities, we may not ask him to stay his hand, or lighten the burdens which he thus lays upon us. Rather let us thank him for placing us under the blessed necessity of going forward in this work; and if, at any time, it seem to press too heavily upon us, let us take it up with new courage in his strength, cast our burden upon the Lord, and he shall sustain us.

Our duty in respect to the cause of missions is not indeed to be ascertained, or to be measured by the degree of success which may presently attend our endeavors. That duty comes to us under the sanction of a higher authority. It lies in two things,—First, it is the will of our ascended and reigning Lord, expressed in a plain command of his word, that we, his disciples, bear a part in causing his Gospel to be preached to every creature. And, second, we have the means of affording essential aid in the accomplishment of this great work, and where there is a knowledge of duty and the means of doing it, there the obligation is perfect, and we are held responsible to the great Lord and Judge of all.

Our privilege, too, in this respect, lies in two things. First, the cause itself is essentially good, and in seeking to promote it, we become co-workers with God, in God's most noble work, call into exercise the purest and best feelings of the heart, and adopt the most effectual way of securing growth in grace, and a high measure of present Christian enjoyment. And, second, all we do in this cause, from love to Christ and our fellow-men, Christ regards as done to himself, and he will remember it to our everlasting joy in the kingdom of glory.

3. Let us learn from our subject a lesson of godly fear, lest by anything wrong in our spirit and manner of doing this work, we turn away God's helping hand from us. The cause, my brethren, in which we are engaged, is God's cause, and not ours; and its success depends absolutely on his blessing. Our plans, our means, our efforts, however multiplied and extended, would not avail for the salvation of a single soul, without the continued guidance and help of God's spirit. "It is not by might nor by power, but by my spirit," that this world's salvation is to be effected. This great cardinal truth is ever to be kept in mind, by missionaries, and the directors of missionary societies and their friends. It should form their plans, guide their policy, animate their efforts, and draw forth their prayers in faith and hope, under a deep, abiding impression, that without the help of God, nothing can be done in this work; and with his help, nothing is too great or too diffi-

cult to be done. Everything we attempt in this great enterprise should be begun, continued and ended, in an inward, heartfelt persuasion that we are simply instruments in God's hand to do God's work; and this should make us most seriously solicitous to do his work in his way, and not in ours. There is no room here for worldly wisdom or worldly policy. The whole enterprise should be conducted in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God. Especially does it become us to cherish habitually a godly fear, a holy jealousy, lest in the doing of the work committed to us, we displease God, and he withdraw his help from us. We may do this in a great variety of ways. We may do this by indulging a spirit of self-confidence, or placing undue reliance on mere human instruments. We may do it by turning aside from our proper work, taking up burdens, which the Lord does not impose upon us, or engaging in controversy about matters which, however important in themselves, or desirable to be attained, fall not within the appropriate sphere of this Board's agency. We may do this by departing from the scriptural model of missions—strictly a spiritual model—and conducting them on a wrong plan; introducing into them more of the form than of the power of religion, more of what is secular and showy, than of what is spiritual and enduring; building of hay, wood, and stubble, rather than of gold, silver and precious stones, which only will abide in the coming day of trial.

In a conversation I had with the Rev. Mr. Tidman, one of the secretaries of the London Missionary Society, some two years since, he made this remark, in reply to a question I put to him, in regard to the policy pursued by his Society in conducting its missions: Our only policy, he said, is to have no policy, but to preach the pure gospel, Christ and him crucified. This remark struck me with force, as having in it sound philosophy, as well as sound scriptural truth. It suggests the only true and efficient policy of conducting Christian missions—a policy aiming, as its main end, at the conversion of souls, and building them up in truth and holiness. This was Paul's policy; it should be ours; and the more closely we adhere to it, the simpler will be our plan, the more plain and unembarrassed our course, and the more likely shall we be to enjoy the continued help of God. Much prayer, much humility, much consciousness of dependence on the Holy Spirit, with great simplicity of purpose, and consecration of heart and life to God's service and glory,—these are the essential elements of efficiency and success in the missionary work. They are right and pleasing in God's sight; they honor his power and grace; and where he sees missions conducted in this spirit, and with this end in view, there he will afford his help, and the work will go forward with power in the conversion and salvation of dying men.

4. Let us learn from our subject a lesson of encouragement and hope in regard to the future. The work of missions, it is true, is encompassed with great difficulties and embarrassments. It is a

work which draws forth little sympathy or co-operation from an unbelieving world. It has no charms for the mere scholar, statesman or philosopher. It is not carried forward by the resources of the great and mighty among men. It is a work not to be consummated in a day or a year, but is to be carried on from generation to generation, how long we know not. It is to be carried on, too, in the midst of toil and suffering, with the sacrifice of much property, and of many lives, and in the face of much opposition and of many reverses and discouragements. Still this work will go forward. It will go forward when we and others now engaged in it are dead and gone. It will pass into other hands, and be urged on by other agents, till the great object, at which it aims, is accomplished, and the whole world converted to God. The cause of missions is God's cause. He has set upon it, in our day, the seal of his approbation; and his promise and power are pledged to make it triumphant over all the earth. It may meet with local and temporary checks. Particular missions may, for a time, fail of success, or be abandoned. False friends may desert the cause, and its true friends may sometimes be ready to faint because of the greatness of the work, and the mighty obstacles which lie in the way of its acccomplishment. The heathen themselves, or such as falsely bear the Christian name, may rise up to persecute and oppose, and governments may put forth the strong arm of power to suppress the progress of truth, and test the fidelity of our missionaries, by subjecting them to trials, like those which the apostles and primitive Christians had to endure; still, I repeat, the cause of missions will go forward. It has gone forward in a remarkable manner in our day, and never perhaps more remarkably than during the last year. Many events have occurred of great and auspicious interest in their bearing on our missions. The mission in Syria, long and severely tried, has assumed a new and very encouraging aspect; and its facilities for preaching the Gospel in that dark land with success were never so great as at present. The great battle of religious freedom, it would seem, has been fought in Turkey, and the victory won. What it cost our fathers more than a century of struggling and suffering to achieve, in England, has been achieved, after the struggle of a few months, in the empire of the Moslems. The rights of Protestantism are recognised, and Protestant churches, under the auspices of our mission there are being established. Divine influence, too, during the past year, has descended upon many of our missions, if not in copious showers, yet in refreshing dews, reviving the hearts of our misionaries, and raising to hope and to God, many of the benighted and the lost. When I read of the work of God among the poor Indians in the far west, and especially of what has transpired within a few months, among the Nestorians, of Oroomiah, and its neighboring villages, I seem to myself to be in the midst of those scenes of mercy which have so often been witnessed in the churches of our own land, and which we gratefully recognise as the manifestation of God's spe-

cial presence and grace. These visitations of divine influence, we may confidently hope, will be more and more frequent, powerful, and extensive, till the seed of the word, having been scattered broadcast over the earth, and the way prepared for so glorious a consummation, nations will be born unto God in a day, and a quick work will be made in bringing the whole world into subjection to Him who reigns king on the holy hill of Zion. Let us then look upon the cause of missions with strong confidence and bright hope. This cause is safe; a spiritual cause, carried on in the hearts of men by God's invisible, almighty power; its elements are truth and love; its seat of action is the soul of man; its fruit, peace, joy, hope, present and everlasting happiness. This cause is safe; and it is the only cause in our world which is safe. Nation may rise against nation, governments may be established and overturned; "revolution may succeed revolution, as waves on a stormy sea;" and all the enterprises and affairs of men may perish and pass away, in disappointment and confusion; but the cause of missions, the cause of God, is safe. Our day of action will quickly be over. Another thirty-six years of the Board's history will soon pass away, but we shall not be here to mingle in its councils, or aid in carrying out its measures. But the power that guards the cause we love, and which is engaged to bear it on to final and complete success, is above all change; it never grows old, is never weary; and when that power has borne on this cause to its destined consummation, then the darkness and miseries of sin shall roll away from all lands; light and salvation bless all the ends of the earth; and unnumbered millions of our race, plucked as brands from the burning, shall stand with white robes and palms in their hands, in the higher and eternal regions, joining in the song in which Christ is united with the Father, "Salvation to God that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever, Amen."

SERMON CCCCXXXII.

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SANCTIFICATION BY MEANS OF THE TRUTH.

Sanctify them through thy truth, thy Word is truth.—John xviii. 17.

The work of sanctification is an extensive subject, and it is as important as it is extensive. It includes all that is doing by the agency of the Spirit of God to reclaim men from their apostacy, and prepare them for the kingdom of heaven. It is one of the prominent characteristics of sin to dissemble, and as sanctification is essential to our final salvation, and as there are many appearances of sanctification that eventually prove to be false, it is of immense importance that the subject should be understood. By sanctification, as the word is used in the Bible, two things would seem to be meant. First, a separation, or setting apart of anything, for the purpose of promoting the worship of God. It was in this sense that the seventh day was sanctified and made the holy sabbath. It was set apart from the other days of the week to promote the service of God. It was in this sense that the tabernacle and the altar, with all the vessels that pertained to the tabernacle worship, were sanctified. The other use of the word differs but little, if any, from this. The only difference would seem to be made, by its being applied to a voluntary and responsible agent. To sanctify, signifies, when applied to men, *to make them holy*. When a sinner is separated from the world, and attached to the service of God, by the influences of the Spirit, the work of sanctification is begun in his heart. In this sense, sanctification is a progressive work. In proportion as the sinner becomes holy he is sanctified. Hence the apostle prayed concerning his brethren at Thessalonica, that the God of peace would sanctify them *wholly*.

The *agency* by which this work is performed, is the Holy Spirit. In his epistle to the Romans, the apostle observes, "being sanctified by the Holy Ghost." To the Corinthian church he remarks, "ye are sanctified by the Spirit of our God," and to the Ephesians his language is, "grieve not the Spirit of God whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption."

But there is another part in relation to this work of sanctification, which it is important we should understand, and that is, that truth is the instrument by which it is performed. *Sanctify them through thy truth, thy Word is truth.* It is to this point that the attention of my hearers, for a few moments, will be invited.

1. It is evident that truth is the great means of sanctification, from the fact that commands and invitations are used, and from the man-

ner in which they are used, in reclaiming men from their lost and perishing condition.

It is a fact that cannot but be seen and admitted by every candid mind, that commands are not only used in the recovery of men to God, but they are used as though they ought to be sufficient to accomplish the work. I mean by this, that when God commands men to turn from their sins, or to repent, or love him, in no case does he intimate that they are under no obligation to obey him, unless some other influence is employed with them. He never tells them to repent, or to love him, on condition that the Holy Spirit shall assist them. What a strange departure from the simplicity of the Gospel there is in the feelings of most men on this subject? They seem to feel that they are wanted to wait and make no effort to obey the command of God, till they are sure that the Holy Spirit is striving with them. Still, it must be seen to be a truth, that there is not the slightest hint in all the Bible, that either saints or sinners are not under obligation to obey these commands, irrespective of any influence or any assistance, from any other quarter. This fact shows that he who made the mind, knows that it ought to be moved by truth. Is not this an evidence that when its stubbornness is overcome, and it is led cheerfully to obey, that it is done by giving efficacy to the truth? If it were accomplished by any other influence, and one that is not within the sinner's reach, it is difficult to see how it would be just to require him to do it. But if it were done by giving the truth an efficacy or power upon the mind which it ought to possess without any other or extra influence,—then obedience may be justly required, and then we are equally certain that the truth is the means or the instrument by which the whole work of conversion and sanctification is accomplished.

2. That truth is the instrument of sanctification may be gathered from the fact that it is only by persuasion, in the use of what is supposed to be truth, that men can influence each other's minds.

It is not pretended that any such effects are produced upon the minds of men by each other, as the conversion or sanctification of the soul. They are unable to give the truth that power or efficacy, which is needed to overcome the prejudice or resistance of the heart. They cannot make the truth like the fire or the hammer, that breaketh the flinty rock in pieces. They cannot make it sharp and powerful as a two edged sword, to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit. These passages, however, undeniably show that the work of sanctification is accomplished by a power that is given to the truth, and not by any other influence. The argument we would here present is this; if all the influence which it is in the power of men to throw upon each other's minds is conveyed by motives or considerations, it is an evidence that the mind was made to be effected by such a kind of influence, and by no other. By our influence upon each other we can affect the choice in a thousand cases, in which a change of the heart is not required.

Is not this an argument that in that choice which is effected only by the Spirit of God, the instrumentality is the same? The choice of the heart, although it is effected only by the Spirit, is effected by the instrumentality of motives, and is it possible for us to conceive how motive can *lie before the mind, or be seen or estimated by the mind*, only in the form of truth?

3. It is by the truth, and by that alone, that men are led to see that they need conversion and sanctification.

This is one of the plainest positions that can be stated in human language. It is impossible to form any conception how the mind can possess an idea on any subject without truth. In order to possess any just impression of his own perishing condition, the sinner must have a distinct and correct idea of the duties that God has required of him. Unless he knows what is required of him, he cannot tell how his character appears in the sight of God. The man who is ignorant of the contents of the Bible, knows equally as little concerning his own character or his own safety. If you endeavor to make him feel that he is in danger, and for that purpose tell him that he is guilty, or that he has exposed himself to the threatenings of God's holy wrath, he does not understand you. Men, before they can be the subjects either of conversion or of sanctification, must not only know what is required of them, but they must possess some just views of the consequences, if they refuse to obey. So deep is the slumber of sin that men are never awaked from it till they are led to see something of the bitter consequences to which it leads. They must not only be convinced that a course of sin is a course of danger, but that provisions have been made for their escape. A mere sense of danger, though indispensable, will never of itself convert the soul. So it is with the backsliding and slumbering Christian. Information on many points is indispensable to his sanctification. He must be convinced of the extent, and of the aggravated character of his departure from the path of duty. He must be led to see the importance of more decided and vigorous efforts, in order to promote either his own salvation or the cause of God. Information upon these subjects must not only be brought before the mind, but it must be made the subject of deep and serious reflection. Truth, although indispensable, cannot quicken and elevate the mind, unless it is held in steady and honest contemplation. Its impressions may flit across the mind at times while its attention is directed to other objects, with as little effect as are produced by shadows, occasioned by moonbeams on a frozen or snow-covered soil. But if the eye of the mind when it is not deeply affected by an opposing influence, be fixed intently upon the truth, the effects will show that that is an influence which it was made to feel.

4. It is by the truth, and by that only, that the various objects on which men are required to place their affections, are presented before them.

The character of the heart, and of course its sanctification, is

affected very much by the character of the object on which its attention, for the greatest share of the time, is fixed. The command of God is, having doubtless our sanctifications as the object, that we "set our affections on things above, and not on things on the earth." In accordance with this, men are estimated by their Judge just according to the object on which they place their affections. If they love themselves, their earthly interests or pleasures supremely, there is nothing in their moral characters, with which he is pleased. The conversion of the sinner consists in placing his affections on objects of a different and more elevated character; and the sanctification of the Christian is equally dependent on the character of the object on which his affections are placed, as the conversion of the sinner. But how shall they place their affections on objects, about which they have no knowledge? If it be our duty to love the character or law of God, or that glorious plan into which the angels desire to look, then the character of these different objects must be seen by the mind. But we have said enough, it is believed, to show that truth is the instrument by which the work of sanctification is carried forward. The work is sometimes said to be promoted by other things, but it is only as they make the truth to be more deeply and powerfully felt. It is said that afflictions often have a sanctifying influence upon the heart and life, but who does not perceive that it is only because they make certain truths to be more clearly and convincingly seen and powerfully felt. From this doctrine, of the truth of which there can be no doubt, we may derive several important practical remarks.

1. If truth is the instrument in the work of sanctification and conversion, it affords an irresistible evidence that *men are voluntary agents, in all that God has required of them.*

Whatever is accomplished by way of truth, is accomplished by motive, and is it not impossible to conceive of any higher or more perfect freedom? In every choice that is effected by motive, there is the offer and the opportunity to yield to its influence, or refuse, just according to our pleasure. What more clear or satisfactory evidence can we have, that the infinitely perfect moral government of God is established upon a basis of perfect equity and justice? In everything that he requires, and in everything that is done by men, by which their immortal destinies are decided, according to his arrangement, they act in view of motives, and of course with perfect freedom.

2. If truth is the instrument in conversion and sanctification, then it becomes a serious inquiry, in what manner, if we would promote that work, it is to be employed.

A thought here falls upon my mind, not a little disheartening and oppressive. It is, that after all that has been done, that men may be converted and saved by the instrumentality of truth, and after our professions of love for our fellow-men, and the immeasurable obligations laid upon us by our conversion, it is to be feared there are none who are ready, though the means and man-

ner in which they are to be used are before them, to enter in earnest upon this work. Is it possible that Christians can believe that the salvation of souls may be depending on an instrumentality within their reach, and yet they have no heart to improve it? Heavy as this reflection bears upon the evidence of our adoption, brethren, I would that there were not too much evidence of its truth. Have I any hearers that earnestly desire to see their neighbors and their friends brought to repent and accept of Jesus Christ? Have I any hearers whose daily prayers and other efforts show that such are their desires? Have I any who are groaning under the burden of their own sins, and in view of the low state of piety among such as profess to be the people of God? Have I any that are weeping in secret places over the multitudes that are making their way down to everlasting death, depending on a hope that will only expose them to shame? Were any of my hearers ready and anxious to enjoy this high privilege and enter upon this work,—did they possess a love for their fellow-men that would never let them rest, while there are any means for them to use by which they may hope to rescue them from death,—it would be an easy and a pleasant task, to make the manner of their duty plain before them. But what encouragement can we have to point out a road to a traveller though it were ever so important that he should pursue it, when he asks not forour direction, and seems determined to pursue the opposite path? Ministers can do nothing more than to describe the way. They can make no one willing to follow the directions which they give. Their only encouragement is the doctrine that is now before us, *truth is the instrument*, by which the Spirit of God is pleased to convert, and sanctify, and save, the souls of men. While the merest remnant of hope remains, that by any exhibition of truth which they can make, they may be the means of saving sinners from the perdition of ungodly men, they are bound to make every effort in their power, and never fail to present the truth at every opportunity. In order that our exhibitions of truth, whether we are the commissioned messengers of truth or only private Christians, may be employed by the Spirit of God, in promoting the great work of sanctification, it is important that we comply with the following directions:

1. It must be presented with a *sincere desire* that it should produce that effect. Ministers of the Gospel are not the only persons who too often present the sublime truths of the Gospel, merely to exhibit themselves. It is a fact that many persons take a pride in being prominent and leading in religious conversation, who talk more for the purpose of exhibiting their knowledge or their piety, than to persuade or stir up their brethren to duty or faithfulness, as is evident from the fact they have little to do in their closets, or in the examination of their own hearts. It is true that God in the sovereign display of his mercy may bless that truth which was exhibited from motives of vanity and pride, but that is not his usual course. His truth, though perfectly adapted to the case of the sin-

ner in which the faithful Christian, in order to secure his blessing, must be presented with the earnestness and zeal of unaffected love and truth.

2. In the proof of a sincere desire that men should be persuaded to repent and live to their own and their immortal interests, will be seen in the manner and tones of the voice. A man must be convinced that you believe and feel what you say, or an exhibition of the most appropriate and important truth will do him no good. Should you meet a man upon the sidewalk and he should tell you that he had just passed your dwelling and saw it to be on fire, you would depend very much on the tones of his voice. If he spoke to you in a smiling and pleasant manner you would receive it as jest for some purpose or other. But if you saw him upon the top of his speed, with anxiety depicted upon every feature of his countenance, and with a voice which from excitement and hurry, could scarcely be understood, your feelings would be very different. It is so when we speak to a man about his duty, or his immortal well-being. If we believe and feel what we say, he knows that we cannot address him in an unfeeling or careless manner. If we believe that he is an enemy to his Judge, and that he must awake from his slumbers and secure the pardon of his sins very soon, or perish for ever, it is impossible but that he will see it in our voice and manner. It is on this point that the most faithful among the ministers of Christ are often severely tried with themselves. That the great things of their message,—the consequences of sin and holiness, the plan of salvation, and the scenes of death, heaven and hell,—should so often be exhibited with so little of that feeling and manner, which it would seem that a firm belief in such points cannot fail to dictate. It is impossible to conceive how much more would be effected by the efforts of the people of God, if truth were always presented by such as felt its importance. If our object is to stir up the mind of a worldly-minded or backsliding brother, or persuade such as have hitherto "cared for none of these things," to look with seriousness at their future interests, the truth must be presented with a manner corresponding, to some extent, at least, with its importance. God is sincere in all his promises, and in all his threatenings, and it is scarcely possible for truth to be presented in that kind and earnest manner which a belief of the truth, and a love for the soul must produce, without reaching the heart. Another evidence that this desire exists that truth should be effectual, must be sought in our closets. If the Christian knows anything of that deep and unutterable anxiety, which always accompanies a love for the souls of men, with a correct sense of their danger, he will feel it in his closet. The Christian having sought strength and wisdom in his closet, should remember that the subjects of conversion and sanctification are not to be mere passive recipients in this work. If the sinner would be the subject of converting grace, he must hear the Word with an honest determination to admit what it says, and do what

it requires. Until he is determined to yield to its decisions, and not allow the world for a moment to turn him aside, it will be like seed "sown among thorns," and will never bring forth fruit to the glory of God. It is similar with Christians in a state of lukewarmness and departure from God. Till they are determined to hear and retain it, truth will never reclaim them and bring them to the path of life. We have already seen that the Spirit has no other instrumentality but that of truth, and it is plain that the truth cannot affect us only by a voluntary yielding to its dictates. The Spirit of God would turn you from sin as a free, voluntary being, because it can be done in no other way. He cannot take you, without your consent, and plant you down as an active Christian, in a state of progressive holiness in the way to heaven. You must follow him willingly when he speaks to you by the truth, or never be reclaimed.

When by a view of the truth you are impressed with a sense of duty, it is the voice of the Spirit of God. When he tells you to repent of your sins and return to your closet,—to establish the duties of religion in your family, or converse with your neighbors, brethren, if you would be sanctified, it must be done. You are praying to be sanctified, and the Spirit of the Lord tells you to fellow his direction, and to perform these known and important duties.

3. If truth is the means of conversion and sanctification, then fearful responsibilities rest upon the people of God. Although truth can be rendered effectual only by the Spirit of God, it is to be exhibited for that purpose by men. It is to be presented as we have seen, with a design as simple and direct to convince or persuade, or in other words, to convert or sanctify the mind, as if we had the power to make it effectual. Such would be our feelings and our conduct, if the condition of sinners and slothful Christians, were as fresh before our minds as it should be. This is a work in which all Christians may engage. There is no preaching that brings the truth with a point so sharp, and directly to the heart, and in a manner so difficult to evade or resist, as when it is presented by a neighbor or a friend, who brings a consistent and upright character, and a warm and benevolent heart. It was in this manner that the primitive disciples "went everywhere preaching the word." How powerful and glorious would be the effects, if all the members of our churches were to be colporteurs of this description? And why not? If we have been plucked as brands from the burning, shall we do nothing when God is willing to bless our efforts to rescue others? What other work is there, to which we can turn our feeble powers, as important as this? If we felt the tenderness and the deep anxiety of our first love, in what way could we employ our minds, that would appear to us as rational, when we come to see the worth of the soul in the light of the Judgment Day, as this? Is there not interest enough in the scenes to which we are rapidly passing, to make it a subject wor-

thy our serious and habitual conversation? But if we take so little interest in the salvation of others, that we have no serious and earnest appeal to make while souls are perishing around us because truth is not presented before them, how can we believe that our spirits are maturing for a residence with the Spirit of Christ, and of just men made perfect? How can we meet these immortal beings at the Judgment of the Great Day, for whose salvation we are doing nothing, if for the want of our efforts they shall be found at the left hand of the Judge?

4. If truth is the instrument in the work of conversion and sanctification, *what an unutterable importance is attached to Bible Classes and Sabbath Schools?*

Where can we find a service that, by the grace of God, will as richly reward a benevolent heart, as to store the minds of children with that truth with which the Spirit of God may "make them wise unto salvation?" How can Christians, especially such as are in the morning of life, neglect so inviting an opportunity to promote the eternal interests of men, and the honor of Jesus Christ?

5. *This subject presents distinctly to our minds our obligations and our encouragement to send the Gospel to the heathen.*

It is as true with the heathen as with sinners in a Christian country, that except they believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, they cannot be saved. But how can they believe on him, of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear, except those who have the Gospel shall send it to them? If the love of the everlasting Redeemer led him cheerfully to give his life, to save such as repent from everlasting death, why do we not conclude at once that if we do nothing in attempting to persuade them with all our facilities and encouragements, *we have not the spirit of Christ?* So increased are the facilities for this work, that comparatively few and feeble as the professed children of God are, they still have it in their power to convey the Gospel to every human being. Let us remember, brethren, that this favorable time for effort *with us* will soon be past for ever. Let us awake and act in accordance with our elevated hopes, and our fearful responsibilities. Then shall we furnish the clearest and most satisfactory evidence that we have the *spirit of Jesus Christ*, and that *we are his.* Then let the scenes of death and judgment come, we shall have the best preparation for them that the universe affords. Whether their coming is soon or sudden, we shall be prepared to say with the poet,

My lifted eye, without a tear,
The gathering storm shall see;
My steadfast heart shall know no fear,
That heart shall rest on thee.

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SERMON CCCCXXXIII.

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THE ABRAHAMIC COVENANT.

The Scriptures foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the Gospel unto Abraham, saying in thee shall all nations be blessed.—Gal. i.i. 8.

After the apostacy of the human race, it being in the purpose of God to provide an economy whereby sinners could be justified and saved, the development of this economy in its visible form was gradually made.

On the first pages of inspiration we perceive the divine intention of mercy obscurely intimated. Then it appears embodied in individual cases of piety. Subsequently, it is manifested in a distinction between classes of mankind—such as "the sons of God and the daughters of men;" and finally, the fruits of redemption are presented as a visibly organized community, avowing their devotion to the service of God, and bearing in themselves the peculiarities of those who are not conformed to this world, but who are transformed by the renewing of their minds, that they may prove what is the good and acceptable and perfect will of God.

In the history of God's plan of redemption, or of the development of the progress of his Church, a marked and eventful epoch is what is familiarly known as "the calling of Abraham." When, consequent upon their dwelling together in the same society, and the unrestrained intercourse of the godly with the profane, of idolators with the worshipers of the true God, the maxims and the practices of the wicked were found to incorporate themselves with the principles and lives of the holy, then, God in his wisdom saw fit to separate one devout family from all the world—to unfold in a more full and detailed manner than had ever before been done, his plan of mercy, and establish his covenant of grace, with the venerable head of that house, and to make him the medium and the instrument of a purer spiritual organization than had ever previously existed. He saw fit, by means of extraordinary interpositions of his providence, to preserve in the posterity of that man, a remarkable family union and distinctiveness, down to a time when

they became sufficiently numerous to be nationally consolidated; and then to lead them forth as a conquering army to the extirpation of heathen nations, and their settlement in a land made their own by his special gift. While they existed as an organized community, through the instrumentality of prohibitory enactments and peculiarities in their national polity and religious observances, he guarded them against holding intercourse with surrounding nations, and reared a middle wall of partition, which effectually turned back the tide of heathenism, and maintained in its simplicity the worship of the one only living and true God, until, in the fulness of time, the great mystery of godliness was disclosed—"God was manifested in the flesh," and a new era in the developments of his gracious economy was introduced; an era in which his Church was blessed with clearer light, attended with mightier demonstrations, and favored with special divine influences, which placed her in a position not only of self-defence, but also imparted to her an aggressive power, in the exercise of which, by the word and spirit of God, she should go forth conquering and to conquer, until her triumphs filled the whole earth.

It is the assigned duty of this occasion to explicate the nature, the extent, and all the characteristics of that transaction, which took place between God and his servant Abraham at the time when he was called away from his home and kindred to sojourn in a strange land, with a view to the fulfilment of God's gracious designs toward men. *This transaction is commonly called the Abrahamic covenant. We shall undertake to unfold its character, and to set forth its high and solemn significancy in their relation to our interests, our hopes and our responsibilities.*

In the inspired records, the transaction referred to is not brought into view in all its details in a single passage. The covenant, in the fulness of all its parts, may be collected from the book of Genesis, from the 12th to the 18th chapters inclusive. In the first instance its great substance was announced; and then, in the subsequent communications of God with Abraham, its parts were more fully disclosed as occasions and circumstances required.

To every one who thoroughly examines and analyzes all that the Scriptures contain upon this subject, it will appear that the covenant transaction is made up of two parts. The one embraces the *great end* or *final cause*; the other includes its subordinate means and instrumentalities. The one is spiritual and permanent; the other is secular and temporal. The latter was fulfilled mainly in the domestic and national history of Abraham and his lineal descendants. The former realizes its fulfilment only in the operations of divine grace upon the soul, which are carried forward and consummated in its endless salvation. The subordinate and temporary department of that cluster of blessings promised to Abraham contains such as these:—a numerous posterity to one who had long regarded himself as doomed to be perpetually childless; unprecedented rapidity of increase among his posterity; special divine

protection against their enemies; assistance in overcoming those nations that stood in the way of their enlargement; a high and honorable position; an overawing power; and an envied name among the nations of the earth.

The spiritual department of this covenant includes three plain and most important promises, which are, in the language of the covenant, these: "I will be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee (Gen. xvii. 7); and in thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed." (Gen. xii. 3.)

These promises are evidently spiritual. In respect to Abraham himself, no one will doubt but that God was the God of his soul, as well as of his body; the guardian of his eternal, as well as his temporal interests. In his case, the language expresses the whole idea of his being his Savior and everlasting portion; and the very same language, in the same connection, applied to his seed, cannot have a different or a more limited meaning. To be the God of the *seed* of Abraham signifies as much as to be the God of *Abraham*. It is true, that in another passage, we are taught that the certain fulfilment of all that the promise imports, in the persons of the individuals of his family, was based upon a condition, which condition is, the fidelity of Abraham in commanding and rightly training his household after him. This passage occurs Gen. xvii. 19. But this condition does in no wise affect the signification of the promise itself. The promise is spiritual, and its blessings are eternal. And the same is true of the third specification of this great and precious pledge, to wit: that in, or through Abraham, all the nations and families of the earth shall be blessed. Some have undertaken to place a limit around this part of the general promise, which they cannot place around either of the preceding ideas; and to make the promise signify merely that the heathen nations would be benefited in various temporal respects, by means of the superior intelligence, the more perfect civilization, and the purer morality of the descendants of Abraham. But to say nothing about the unreasonableness of this interpretation in other respects, it is palpably opposed by that passage which we have placed at the head of this discourse; "and the Scriptures foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, in thee shall all nations be blessed." The blessing which they were to receive through Abraham is the Gospel; and they are not merely to be elevated by it in their temporal condition to a higher degree of civilization and refinement; but they are to be *justified* through faith in the Gospel; *i. e.*, all nations are to be spiritually and savingly blessed through Abraham.

These three, therefore, are the great elements and essential parts of the covenant which was made with the venerable patriarch. It is with all propriety called "*the covenant of grace.*" It begins by imparting a personal assurance to him of his salvation; then, upon the condition specified, an assurance of the salvation of his posterity, in their generations, so long as they should be preserved

a distinct and peculiar people; and it ends with the assurance, that ultimately the Gospel shall be preached indiscriminately to all nations, and that they, by its converting power, shall all become the spiritual seed of Abraham, and be made heirs according to the promise which God gave to him, *i. e.*, heirs of the righteousness of faith.

And now, with this view of the two departments of the great original transaction between God and Abraham before us, we may proceed to explain several subsequent transactions and events, which to some have appeared embarrassing and difficult.

1. The transaction between God and Moses, on behalf of the children of Israel, on Mount Sinai, in Arabia. This event occurred 430 years after the Abrahamic promises were made. In the meantime the descendants of Abraham had lived an unsettled life, and experienced a great diversity of fortune; notwithstanding which, they had multiplied with singular rapidity, and were then by the strong arm of Jehovah, just being brought out of Egyptian bondage, to be organized into a national capacity, that they might take possession of the promised land of Canaan, and that the spiritual blessings which were promised to them, might be more certainly and effectually realized. The transaction at Sinai, therefore, was not the institution of a new order of things, but the carrying out of an old one. The divine communications to Moses in Arabia, were but the means of fulfilling his prior and more important communications to Abraham in the land of the Canaanites. It was not a new frame-work that was there reared, but a new system of scaffolding, which was thrown around the old to facilitate its completion.

This transaction consisted principally of three things: 1. The renewal of the moral law and a few positive institutions, such as circumcision, which had fallen into desuetude. 2. The institution of a religious ceremonial, which, in the absence of a full and completed revelation, should serve to keep alive in their minds a knowledge of the most essential truths of the covenant of grace, and secure the performance of their most material duties. 3. It consisted in prescribing to them a civil polity, which was to form the basis of their national union, to regulate them in the ordinary affairs of life, and especially in their treatment of other nations.

These are the principal communications which were made at Sinai, and it is plain that they are all of a subordinate and temporary character. They mark what may be called a new dispensation of the Abrahamic covenant, but not its abolition, nor the modification even of any of its essential principles. Abraham was gathered unto his fathers, and the promise that God would be his God was fulfilled. His descendants had already become a nation. They were organized under a Theocracy. God had taken them under his special care, that the promise to be the God of his seed after him, in their generations, might receive its perfect fulfilment.

Substantially, this state of things continued during the period embraced in the national history of Abraham's descendants, or the history of the Jews, and until an event, far greater than the events of Sinai, was ushered upon the world. *This was the advent of Jesus Christ, the Messiah.* It came not indeed accompanied with those imposing solemnities which attended the giving of the law, but the event itself was unspeakably more magnificent and glorious.

This is the second transaction to which our explication of the covenant applies. The three spiritual elements, or parts of the covenant, are fulfilled by three distinct and successive dispensations, or systems of measures. The first, in its characteristics, is domestic and patriarchal. The second is national and ceremonial. The third is Christian and universal. The first has respect to Abraham and his immediate descendants, and supplies the means for their salvation. The second includes his posterity, in all their generations, as a community or nation, and is adapted to all their wants. The third embraces all the nations of the earth, and prospectively ensures their conversion to God and their salvation. Now it appears perfectly clear that the Christian dispensation, like the ceremonial economy of the Jews, was brought in for the purpose of carrying out and fulfilling the great promised blessings of the covenant of grace. It is plain that here are not three new spiritual covenants, nor two, but one only, administered or executed by three systems of means, adapted to its different stages of progress and development. Nor is there anything, as far as the great substance of the covenant is concerned, abolished or changed, and something new put into its place. The covenant, on the contrary, is one and the same. It was no more done away by the introduction of the Christian dispensation, than it was by the giving of the law. It must be so, or else the promise which God made to Abraham never has been, and in the nature of the case never can be fulfilled. God as truly promised that all the nations of the earth should be spiritually blessed in Abraham, as he promised that Abraham himself should be blessed. This was not done before the giving of the law; and it certainly was not done while the knowledge of the true religion was shut up like a sealed book, within the Jewish nation. If the covenant, therefore, terminated its existence with the commencement of the Christian era, its promises are forfeited, and it has fallen a dead letter to the earth.

And besides, what saith the New Testament on this subject? Does it, or does it not recognize the Abrahamic covenant as still in existence, and of force? We shall hear: "Know ye, therefore, that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham. And the Scriptures foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the Gospel unto Abraham, saying, in thee shall all nations be blessed; Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us, that the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus

Christ. Brethren, I speak after the manner of men: though it be but a man's covenant, yet if it be confirmed, no man disannulleth, or addeth thereto; and this I say, that the covenant which was confirmed before of God in Christ, the law, which was 430 years after, cannot disannul, that it should make the promise of none effect; "and if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed and heirs according to the promise." These passages occur in the third chapter of Galatians.

Now, here it is expressly affirmed, that believers under the Christian dispensation are partakers of the blessings which were promised to Abraham, and are recognized as his spiritual seed; also that Christ came in the flesh, and was crucified, not to destroy that covenant, but to fulfil its provisions, "that the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through him." This certainly could not be true, if the covenant had ceased to exist. And it is further expressly affirmed, that the law which was given at Sinai, could have no effect to disannul the covenant which was 430 years older than itself, and which had been confirmed by God as a perpetual covenant. See Gen. xvii. 7. The law was certainly no part of the covenant, for it was given in no connection with it, and did not exist until more than 400 years after it. The coming into existence of the law, therefore, or its ceasing to exist, could in no wise affect the existence of the covenant,—so the Scripture quoted does most positively affirm. Yet, the only thing that can be alleged as evidence of the doing away of the Abrahamic promise, is what the Scriptures assert concerning the doing away of the law; and if the Scriptures themselves have provided against deriving any such conclusion from this fact, then is there not, from any source, one particle of evidence that the covenant is disannulled.

Another proof to the same purpose is in the Epistle to the Romans, chap. xi., where the apostle is asserting the temporary rejection of the Jews from the blessings of the covenant for their unbelief; and the reception of the Gentiles in their place. It is done under the figure of an olive-tree. The Apostle saith, "if the root be holy, so are the branches: and if some of the branches be broken off, and thou, being a wild olive-tree, were grafted in among them, and with them partakest of the root and fatness of the olive-tree, boast not against the branches; but if thou boast, thou bearest not the root, but the root thee." If this figure illustrates anything, it is the union of the Gentile converts with the Jews in the same covenant, and their participation with them in the same blessings. What else can be the meaning of their being grafted in among the branches, and with them partaking of the root and fatness of the olive-tree? And furthermore, it is predicted that the Jews will ultimately be brought back and grafted again into their own olive-tree. See verses 23, 24. When they are restored to the covenant, will it be the same with that from which they were rejected? If not, how can it be their *own* olive-tree? and if it is the same to

them, must it not be the same now to the Gentiles? But, perhaps, I am taking more pains than is necessary to establish so plain a position. Let us, then, come to the conclusion that the covenant made with Abraham is the covenant of grace on which the Church is built and sustained in all ages of the world. They that are of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham. They enjoy every promise that was made to him.

Let us, then, for a moment examine the tenor of that covenant in which we are included, that we may know how rich and large our mercies are. We are taught that Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness—consequent upon his faith;—God became his God, and his salvation was secured. And we are also taught that when Abraham believed God, upon the simple condition that he should command his children and his household after him, that they should keep the way of the Lord to do justice and judgment, that the Lord might bring upon him that which he had spoken, God promised to become the God of his seed, and their salvation would be secured. Now, if every believer in God in all ages of the world enters into the place of Abraham—into the same covenant, and enjoys the same promises with him, then, whenever he believes, God becomes his God; and upon the same condition on which the promise to Abraham rested, he promises to bestow spiritual and saving blessings upon his seed after him. This is certainly the case if the covenant is the same. If the seed of the believer is not included, the covenant is not the same, and he is not an heir according to the promise made to Abraham. If the covenant now is but half as extensive as it was of old, surely it is another covenant. Surely no one, least of all a Christian parent, will ever feel that it is an immaterial thing to lift out of the sacred enclosure all the seed of the faithful. If anything would essentially alter the basis of a covenant, this would. And what are the statements of the New Testament upon this vital point? The Apostle Peter, preaching upon the day of Pentecost, uses this language (Acts ii. 39):—"The promise is unto you and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord your God shall call." This language places the Christian believer precisely in the position of Abraham himself;—it is an explicit reiteration of all the parts of the covenant. And the Apostle Paul in the 16th chapter of the book of Acts, when answering the inquiry of the terrified jailor, "What must I do to be saved?" says, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shall be saved, and thy house." A very strange and adventurous assertion, if the seed of believers have no participation with them in the blessings of the covenant. And the same Apostle, in another instance (1 Cor. vii. 14), when prescribing the course of duty to believers who are already in the marriage relation with unbelievers, directs them on their part to continue therein, and not disturb the harmony of their union, and for their comfort in these circumstances, he adds, "For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is

sanctified by the husband; else were your children unclean, but now are they holy." I need not spend time to expose a weak and unnatural gloss which has been attempted upon this passage which would make it imply the illegitimacy of the children; inasmuch as (as far as I know,) such a notion never was entertained, in the Church or in the world. The plain and necessary meaning, therefore, of the text is, that if the believing party were not taken by God as the representative of the children, their interest in the covenant would be sacrificed; but now it is not so. Taken, then, in any point of view, whether as an unavoidable inference from the perpetual character of the covenant, or from the testimony of Sacred Writ, the conclusion is the same and inevitable, to wit, that the seed of believers are included with them in the covenant, and are inheritors of the promises. This point being determined, we can see our way clearly to another. It is on the assumption that the believer is furnished with a sign or badge, declarative of his interest in the promises. Should the sign also be applied to his seed? We here occupy a position from which we may avail ourselves of several means of ascertaining the truth.

First, an *a priori* sentiment of what would be reasonable in the case. If it is important that the believer's interest in the covenant of grace should be visibly betokened to the world, why is it not equally so in the case of his seed? They are as truly included. Their interest is as much a reality, and it is of equal importance to them; what else can we expect but that the sign of their relation should be affixed upon them; and besides, from the nature of the case, a seal of a covenant cannot well be applied to a part and not the whole of it. If it ratifies anything, it must ratify all that it contains; and how can this be, unless it be applied to the seed of believers? This appears to be the rational sentiment that we should have in the case; and precisely in accordance with it are all the known facts. "Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness; and he received the sign of circumcision a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had, yet being uncircumcised." And God said unto him, "Ye shall circumcise the flesh of your fore-skin, and it shall be a token of the covenant betwixt me and you; and he that is eight days old shall be circumcised among you, every man-child in your generations; and the uncircumcised man-child whose flesh of his fore-skin is not circumcised, that soul shall be cut off from his people: he hath broken my covenant." It is plain, that upon the ground of the faith of Abraham alone the badge of the covenant was applied to all his seed; and because they were interested in the covenant with him. This settles the principle. In a matter of this kind, what is true once is true always. This principle was acted upon throughout all Israel from the beginning to the end of their history.

But it is said, at the commencement of the Christian dispensation, circumcision was abolished with the ceremonial law, and we

have therefore no more to do with it. It is true that circumcision was abolished at the termination of the Mosaic dispensation, and therefore with it, as a seal of the covenant, we have no more to do. It is a fair question, why was circumcision abolished? It was no part of the ceremonial law originally, for it existed long before it; and the Apostle John affirmed to the Jews, that Moses gave them circumcision, not because it was of Moses, but of the Fathers. Circumcision, therefore, had a significancy and a design wholly apart from that of the ceremonial law. Why, then, was it abolished in connexion with it? In obtaining a clear view of this point, several things are necessary to be taken into account.

1. The seal of a covenant is no part of the covenant itself; it is a mere appendage, wholly distinct from the compact which it ratifies and binds. It is liable, therefore, to be separated from it; to be removed, or changed; and that, too, when no change takes place in the covenant itself. Then, (2.) during the period of its use, circumcision was applied to other purposes besides that one for which it was originally instituted. It was adopted when the law was given, as a national sign; so regarded and treated by the Jews, after the same manner as the Sabbath, which was instituted at the beginning of the world, was incorporated with the Jewish polity, and became one of their national institutes. It also was blended with their types and symbols, and became typical in its character; as a bloody rite, it was emblematical; and, with all their sanguinary ceremonies, pointed to the blood of atonement; and for these reasons, it had become, in the mind of a Jew, essentially connected with their ceremonial and typical law. These all had their fulfilment in the sacrifice of Christ, and it was improper to retain them in use after the great antitype had come. So, for the same reason, it was inexpedient to preserve in use the rite of circumcision, whose typical character had identified it with those things that were then to pass away. Here is a manifest reason why circumcision should pass away with the law of ceremonies; but is there any reason why the covenant should be left without a token or seal? We surely know of none; we should not anticipate that it would be so left. If the original seal is removed, we look for another in its place. Has the covenant, then, a new seal? Upon this point, among Christians, there happens to be no dispute. Baptism is universally received, by those who do not deny the existence of all external ordinances, as the sign and badge of the righteousness of faith, or of a Christian profession under the new dispensation. Is it asked, does it take the place of circumcision? We answer, no denomination of evangelical Christians uses it for any other purpose. If it is not employed as the sign of a Christian profession, it is employed either superstitiously or wholly without signification.

The further question, then, to be answered is, how extensively is it to be applied? Is it to be applied to believers only, or to their seed also? We ask, why should it be applied to believers

only? It was not so of old. The covenant remains unchanged. The seed of believers are included in it, and the seal belongs not to a part but to the whole of it. Shall it then be applied to believers only and not to their seed? We answer, No. As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be—let it be applied to them both.

But we shall be met here with the allegation that there is no command in the New Testament to baptize children. Let it be granted for a moment, that this is true, and we inquire is there in it any permission to *forbear* to baptize them? Baptism we have seen is the seal of the covenant; so acknowledged to be by the practice of all Christians. But the application of the seal of the covenant to the children of believers is not a newly adopted practice, it is a long established usage; and all analogy and all the dictates of reason bind us to adhere to that usage until we are expressly directed to depart from it. That which requires the interposition of special divine authority to justify it therefore, is not the continuing to do what has always been done, but the ceasing to do it. Is it asked then, where is our command to baptize children? We ask, in our turn, where is your permission to neglect to do it?

But if it be confidently asserted that there is no command in the New Testament to baptize children, we may ask again, is there any to baptize women? Women under the old dispensation were not circumcised and children were—by what singular stretch of authority is it assumed now to apply the badge of the covenant where it was not applied of old, and to withhold it where it certainly was applied? If an express command is to be insisted on in the case how is this difficulty to be overcome? But let us examine a little the allegation that there is no command in the New Testament—to baptize children the seed of believers. Is this certainly so? What signifies the Savior's departing injunction, "Go ye, and disciple all nations, baptizing them?" Of whom are all nations constituted? Of men, or women, or children exclusively? Or are they constituted of all of them together? and by what right is any class of those who constitute the nations excepted? when this command of the Savior has been fully obeyed, and all the nations are baptized, will the children included in them then be baptized or will they not? This question requires no answer.

But it will be said again, that in order to baptism, the nations must be discipled—that faith is a necessary prerequisite to baptism in the New Testament. "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved," and for this reason children must be excluded. It is perfectly true that faith is made an essential prerequisite to baptism throughout the New Testament. In all covenant transactions between God and his creatures, faith is required in the transacting party. God invites, commands, threatens, and proffers good conditionally to those who do not believe: he makes covenant pledges only to those who believe. This principle we

adopt without any limitations whatever; and hence we do not believe that adults, who must act on their own responsibility, are to be admitted to the ordinance of baptism without a profession of their faith. Nor do we believe that they have a right to present their children for baptism, seeing there is no faith in them who are to assume the responsibilities of the covenant. If God will not perform covenant transactions with them for themselves without faith, he surely will not do it with them for their children without faith. And further, we do not believe that the children of believing parents, in whom faith is not developed, are competent to enter into covenant with God for themselves, on their individual and independent responsibility. This would be a transaction without faith and in opposition to the principles of the Gospel. But we do believe, without a doubt, that believers may enter into covenant with God, and that too, not only for themselves, but for those who belong to them as natural seed. In this case the transaction is not with the seed, but with the believer, on their behalf; and it is not without faith, but with faith in the transacting party; and as in the case of Abraham, he believed God and it was counted unto him for righteousness, and he received the sign of circumcision and applied the sign also to all his seed; so the Christian parent believes and it is counted for righteousness, and he receives the sign of baptism, and may also apply it to his children. There is no departure from the principle of the New Testament in this. Nor do the New Testament Scriptures assert any principle here, different from what is maintained in the Scriptures of the Old Testament. It is no more true that faith is necessary to baptism, than it is that under the old dispensation it was necessary to circumcision. This is clearly affirmed in respect to Abraham in the fourth chapter of the Epistle to the Romans. Abraham believed God and it was counted unto him for righteousness, and he received the sign of circumcision a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had, yet being uncircumcised, that is, *before he was circumcised*, Abraham believed in order to circumcision; and this was required of every Jew and every proselyte, when they received circumcision themselves, acting on their own responsibility, or when they presented their seed to be circumcised. They were required to profess themselves believers in, and worshipers of the only living and true God. Faith was universally exacted as a condition of receiving the seal of the covenant. This was as true under the Old Testament economy as it is under the New; and yet we know that under the old economy this was consistent with the application of the seal to the seed of the believer on his faith. It cannot, therefore, be inconsistent with the same thing under the new economy.

Our conclusion then is this. The Abrahamic covenant is the platform of the church in all ages. It is the covenant of grace in its most extensive signification. It is the same under the Christian that it was under the Patriarchal and Mosaic dispensations.

It includes both believers and their seed, and the seal of the covenant is equally applicable to them both. Baptism, therefore, which is the sign of the Christian's faith, under the new dispensation is to be applied to all believers and to their children.

We have time only briefly to speak of the nature of the relation which the children of believers sustain to the Church, together with a few practical duties which this relation involves. The children of believers sustain a real relation to the Church. This is no fiction. They have a most important interest in the promised blessings of the covenant of grace; an interest which can in no wise be neglected or trifled with, without sin and the most fearful consequences. *This relation has its peculiarities.* The subjects of it are not active in the original transaction. They are represented in their parental head;—he acts for them. It is he that believes. To him the promises are made, and he assumes the responsibility of "commanding them after him;" of so training them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, that, in accordance with his gracious economy, he may fulfil all his promises concerning them. Their interest and their claims are through the parent, secondary and mediate; and so, too, are their responsibilities. The children of the covenant, as children, have no separate and independent rights and privileges in the Church, which they can assert for themselves. The parent only can assert them in accordance with the principles of the Gospel. They have not an independent claim upon the ordinances of the Church. The parent can claim them so far as their end can be accomplished through the children. Whatever he finds them qualified to do, or to have done for them, without violating any of the great principles of the Gospel, and in accordance with its spirit, the parent may, and is in duty bound, to have done. He may have them baptized, because, from the nature of the ordinance, its design can be realized without activity in the subjects. It is a visible token of the covenanted blessings, whether they know it and can appreciate the fact or not. But he may not bring them to the Lord's table while they are incapable of appreciating its design (whether it be for want of intellectual or moral qualifications), because the right use of this ordinance requires activity in the subjects. "Do this as oft as ye do it in *remembrance* of me."

And the same principle holds true in respect to the discipline and censures of the Church; their liability is not direct and immediate, but it is mediate, through the parent. They are bound to obey him, and at his command to yield conformity in their lives to all the requirements of the Gospel; and he is bound to God and the Church, as well as in fidelity to their souls, to see to it that they do so. If the children of believers walk disorderly and are not restrained, the natural and the proper course on the part of the Church in the first instance is to call the believers themselves to account; and if need be, to discipline them until, as the responsible and imperative heads of their families, they do com-

mand their children and their households after them, that they shall keep the way of the Lord. Is it asked, then, whether baptized children are the subjects of Church discipline? We answer, yes. Not, however, directly, to the neglect of the parent, by the Church in her organized capacity; but through the natural organ which God has appointed—their own parents in the Church. Is it asked, who is responsible for the orderly walk and exemplary lives of baptized children? We answer as we have done already, the children are directly responsible to their parents, and their parents to the Church. Let the Church be vigilant and faithful in watching over the conduct of the parents, and in assisting them in the discharge of their duties toward their children; and let parents feel the extent of their responsibility and privilege in this matter, and endeavor to act worthily of the high and solemn position in which the Divine Author of the covenant has placed them, and we doubt not the wisdom and benevolence of his economy in the Church, will abundantly appear in the rich fruits of Divine grace which shall manifest themselves among the seed of the faithful.

We can add but a few remarks more upon the subject of parental duty, and the duty of the Church to the seed of believers within her pale. 1st. It is the duty of every Christian parent to make himself thoroughly acquainted with his own relations and the relations of his children to the Church, and with all the duties which are involved in these relations. They occupy a solemn position. Eventful consequences depend upon them. Neglect of any known duty, or even ignorance of duty, may result in an evil which, throughout eternity, they cannot sufficiently bewail. 2d. *It is the duty of all Christian parents to have their children baptized.* This duty grows out of their relation to the Church. The relation is a reality, and the duty is a real and imperative one; and it cannot be neglected or treated with remissness without sin. 3d. It is the duty of Christian parents to train up their children strictly in the ways of virtue; to restrain them from all courses of immorality, and of sinful or dangerous pleasure; and to cause them to conform their lives to all the requirements of the Gospel. Do any say this is too hard a requirement—they cannot do it? We can only answer them now by saying, it is their duty. God will strictly require it of them, and will admit of no apology to justify or extenuate their failures. 4th. It is the duty of the Church, as an organized body, to supervise the whole subject of the training of baptized children; to see to it that professedly Christian parents do their duty, and to assist them, as far as is necessary, to secure their proper instruction, discipline and moral culture; and to pray earnestly for them that the promise of the covenant may be fulfilled, and that they may be saved. 5th. It is the special duty of ministers of the Gospel who have the charge of the souls both of parents and children, to watch over this great work in all its departments, and with faith and untiring zeal, to labor for its accomplishment.

Finally, It is the duty of all parents, whether professedly Christian or not, to remember that they sustain very important and solemn relations to their children. That their conduct toward them is destined to have a most decisive influence in the formation of their characters, and an equally decisive bearing upon their eternal destinies. God will exact of them all, faithfulness in the parental relation, and he will soon call them to an awfully solemn account for what they have done to fit their children for heaven or hell.

DISCOURSE CCCCXXXIV.

BY THE REV. LYMAN BEECHER, D.D.,

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GOD IN THE STORM.*

They that go down to the sea in ships, that do business in great waters;
These see the works of the Lord, and his wonders in the deep.
For he commandeth and raiseth the stormy wind, which lifteth up the waves thereof.
They mount up to the heaven, they go down again to the depths; their soul is melted because of trouble.
They reel to and fro, and stagger like a drunken man, and are at their wit's end.
Then they cry unto the Lord in their trouble, and he bringeth them out of their distresses.
He maketh the storm a calm, so that the waves thereof are still.
Then are they glad because they be quiet, so he bringeth them unto their desired haven.
Oh that men would praise the Lord for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men!—PSALM CVII. 23–31.

I HAVE never before been called to speak in circumstances like these. A few days since, we stood here before God, to supplicate deliverance from a threatened speedy death. I have before supposed myself not far from the grave, but it was at home, surrounded by my family and friends, and whatever could cheer the dying hour. But never, till recently, did I realize, that probably there might be but a step between me and death; and in full health, amid the war of elements, await in suspense the stroke which at any moment might fall upon us all. But the storm is past, and we are all alive, to praise Him who heard our supplications and preserved us. And what direction of our thoughts can be more proper, than a brief review of the perils we have passed through? The evidence of the Divine interposition in answer to prayer to save us, and the returns which it becomes us to make for our signal and merciful preservation.

In respect to our dangers, I need not say to *you*, who passed through them, that they were great.

For thirty-six hours the wind raved and the waves rolled with a fury and power unknown, for so long a time, to the most experienced navigators on board. Travelling mountains, with the power of the Iceberg, the Avalanche, or the Niagara, for one day and two nights, as far as eye could reach, covered the surface

*This discourse or address was delivered at the meeting of the passengers, convened on board the Great Western, Sept. 22, 1846, to offer thanksgivings to God for their preservation through the recent protracted storm.

of the deep; thundering loud and unceasingly around us. The onset commenced on Saturday night, and raged increasingly till Sabbath morning, when, instead of mitigation, it gathered new power, and then commenced the work of desolation.

The sails on the fore yards, clued down, burst from their fastenings, and roared and flapped furiously, defying control. In the meantime, the sea rose rapidly, breaking over and against the ship. At 4 A. M. it had risen to a hurricane gale, and veering to the northwest; the ship at the same time broke from her course into the trough of the sea; a condition of imminent peril, during which a sea broke in upon the main deck, and drove a great quantity of water into the engine room; a stroke at the heart of life, our machinery.

At 11 o'clock, A. M., a heavy wave broke over the fore part of the starboard wheel-house, and drove the iron life-boat and the ice-house—of some six or seven tons—furiously against the wheel-house and side of the ship; and before they could be fastened, the careening of the ship sent them sundry times back and forth, threatening instant destruction. Such, and so rapid were the successions of disaster, that an attempt was made to wear ship, as less perilous than her present condition; but finding her uncontrollable, she was permitted to return to her course; probably our greatest danger escaped.

About noon, a mighty wave struck the starboard wheel-house, and tore up the fastenings of spikes, and iron bands and bolts; throwing off the whole top and outside covering, breaking the under half of the spring beam, and shook to their foundation, and lowered perceptibly, the timbers which sustained the wheel. Thus enfeebling the arm of our power in the climax of our danger. The wave, with portions of the wreck, rolled deep and dark over the quarter-deck; one of which struck the Captain on the head, while the wave drove him insensible to the stern of the ship, where the network did but barely save him from an ocean grave.

About 1 o'clock, while many were seated in the lower cabin, a sea struck the ship. A tremendous crash was heard on deck, and instantly the cabin was darkened, and torrents of water came pouring down through the sky-lights; all sprang to their feet; and a scream of terror rang through the ship. At this time, the ship pitched and rolled so fearfully, that with no little difficulty we could maintain our position upon our seats, and not a few received bruises and contusions, notwithstanding their efforts.

In these circumstances, you remember, a proposition was made, and accepted, I believe, by all who could attend, to meet in the lower cabin for prayer. It was prayer, not in words and forms merely, but the importunity of the heart; crushed by perils from which it could not escape, and pressed by the complex interests of time and eternity; looking up to the only Power in the universe that could save. Subsequently to this meeting, in the evening, Dr. Balch concluded to administer the sacramental communion in his

own room, for his own, and the consolation of a few friends; but his purpose becoming known, the number who desired to unite so increased, that the service was administered in the cabin. Having no knowledge of the change of place, myself and some others of my ministerial brethren were not present. In the mean time the storm raged on; but from the time of our public supplications, the desolations ceased.

We had hoped, the preceding night, that the morning would bring a change; and in the morning, that noon would witness a favorable crisis; and at noon, that evening would realize our hopes. But the storm travelled on, from morning to noon, and from noon to evening, with augmented power, till it became evident that we must encounter the terrors of another night; and though our hopes of deliverance were not utterly extinguished, my own, and the general opinion was, that the ship would not ride out the storm of another night. Not that she would founder intact, amid any winds or waves the Atlantic would bring upon her; but that, smitten by their relentless powers, she would be torn, and crushed, and sunk. And now, while prayer unceasing went up to God, I have cause to know that, on the part of numbers, immediate preparations for eternity commenced, in the rapid retrospect of the past, the circumspection of the present, and the anticipations of the future; and not a few, I trust, with calm resignation and peace that passeth knowledge, and joy unspeakable, were prepared to meet their God.

And now the dreaded night came on, in darkness visible and terrible convulsions. It was long and dreadful. On my pillow, without sleep, as I had done the night preceding, I watched it, and learned thoroughly the chart of the ship's, and winds' and waves' motion.

It commenced with a long, slow roll of the ship, to and fro, almost from beams' end to beams' end, thrice repeated. Then ensued a momentary quiet and onward motion of the ship, and then suddenly the thunder of winds and waves began, louder and louder, and more powerful and rending, as if every portion of our ship would be torn in fragments and scattered upon the deep. Then gradually the thunderings ceased, as if the elements, wearied and breathless by their joint efforts, had paused to rest and gain breath for another assault. This dreadful rotation continued till between three and four o'clock, when all at once the onethunder seemed to burst into many thunders of equal power, and without intermission roared and tossed and tore, as if the conspiracy of winds and waves were rallying all their forces, and making their last effort to destroy us. But gradually it subsided, only to give place, about five o'clock, to a squall more terrible. In the language of an intelligent passenger, "It struck the ship suddenly, a perfect tornado. She careened over, and buried her gunwales in the ocean; her wheel-house, covered by the waves, that helped the wind to lay her on her side. There she lay for a few moments, stricken power-

less, at the mercy of the waves. At this critical moment, when another wave might have finished her, the engine was true to her duty, and round and round thundered her iron wings; when gradually recovering her upright position, the good ship, quartering to the sea, came up to her course." This condition of the ship in the deep gulf, on her beams' ends almost, and covered with waves, was seen by another, who, witnessing her hesitation and trembling for so long a time in her deplorable condition, concluded that she would never rise. And the same deep careening was felt by another, who started up, thinking that all was over and the ship sinking in the waves of the sea.

And now, at last, when the wind veered to the North, and the clouds were lifted up, and the morning light shone brighter upon us, and we thought all danger past, the real danger of the ship, in the lulling of the wind, travelling over such mountains and valleys of water, was scarcely diminished; perhaps even augmented. I stood at this time upon the quarter-deck, and beheld the expanse to the horizon around, filled with mountains of water with crested top, tossing and raging in all directions. On one of these waves our noble ship rose gracefully to the top, whence I looked down to the deep gulf of waters below; and another wave, tall as the one I rose upon, rushing onward to meet the ship as she descended; and the ship, like an arrow, dropping down to meet the wave. They met;—she paused, trembled, and rose, and passed over. Three such waves, in rapid succession, our captain saw approach the ship, in such direction as extinguished hope, and made him think her escape impossible; each of which unexpectedly broke near the ship and passed harmlessly away.

Such are the evidences of our peril. Let us now survey the evidence, that God, in answer to prayer, interposed to protect and deliver us.

By God, I mean not eternal, material, unthinking nature, of complex causations and indications of design, without a Designer; nor the mechanism of nature's laws; the offspring of a Divine intelligence, and the sole executors of all the eternal counsels of his will, in his natural and in his glorious mediatorial moral government; a stupendous complex machine; one on whose movements depend the physical events and moral histories of time; whose pendulum, six thousand years ago, with cold heart and icy hand, he swung and turned his back upon our world, and has not entered it, and will not, till it has prepared, by its own motions, his work for the Day of Judgment.

There are no laws of nature, whose unwatched onward movement could administer the rewards and punishments, and discipline and promised protections, in answer to prayer, of the remedial government of God. Left to themselves, they move on without reference to the character and deeds of men, and the exigencies of a reforming government in the hand of the Mediator. They are uniform in all their attributes and results, and must be, to answer the per-

manent and uniform ends of their agency; and can, by no power of his own, accomplish these steady results, and veer about continually to meet the ever-changing exigencies of a moral providence, to meet the continual fluctuations of human character, no more than the battery, chained down to one direction, can send protection or death to all points of the horizon, and the infinite variable exigencies of good or evil within its circumference; no more than an army can stand still and run at the same time, or march at the same time upon a straight and an infinitely crooked line.

And yet, in the hand of God, they have a work to perform, which he can employ them to do, without so innovating upon their uniformity as to abolish science and experience, and the calculations of life.

Some of these laws men, in a limited sphere, can modify and apply to wise and useful purposes, without innovating upon their general unmodified order: as in agriculture and chemistry; and mock storms, volcanoes and earthquakes; and cannot the God of storms and earthquakes do the same? Once, for a thousand years, he did control the laws of Nature, in many respects, aside from their native course, in good and evil, according to its character and deeds, in maintaining or abandoning his institutions and worship; thus corroborating, by the sanctions of time, the motives of eternity, in maintaining his worship against the encroachments of idolatry.

He sent the plagues of Egypt to deliver them; gave them bread from Heaven, and water and meat in the barren wilderness. Once in seven years their land lay fallow, and the year preceding produced the results of two harvests; and peace and war, and rain and drought, and abundance and famine, and sickness and health, and captivity or safety were the varying and embodied allotments of their history, as they obeyed or disobeyed the laws and institutions of heaven. Now I should be glad to know where those laws of nature were, all this time, which are never reached by prayer or touched by the hand of Omnipotence, and yet dodged about in endless mazes to meet the ever-varying exigencies of a nation, for a thousand years, according to its character and deeds.

How can prayer be answered by nature's laws, when it is the single, onward, overpowering movement of nature's laws which creates our distress, and nature has no ears to hear, and no mechanism to let on or let off the pressure as our exigencies demand? O God, it is thou that ridest on the whirlwind and directest the storm. So in the hurricane we understood the matter, and went directly to Him who on earth walked upon the waves and stilled the tempest, and brought his disciples to land. And with infinite benignity he heard our prayer, and comforted our troubled heart and delivered us.

By what law of wind or wave could our ship have held on her course for thirty-six hours, through raging winds, and over mountain waves and deep valleys, every moment changing their relation

to the ship and her course, and environing her with the network of Death; any one of which, had it struck her in one of the thousand ways it might, was sufficient to whelm her in the deep?

Where now was the mechanism of nature's laws to save us; and who but God, by his providential control of them, could have opened a way for the ransomed of the Lord to pass? What mechanism of nature's laws stopped the wreck and desolation, which for half a day and more, had been multiplying upon us, from the time of our prayer meeting, though the storm raged on for 24 hours longer, with greater power and peril than before? Who saved us, when the wind had knocked down our good ship, and the wave had buried her gunwales and wheel house, and she struggled, and trembled, and groaned through all her timbers, but could not rise? And who stopped the lion mouth of three successive waves, that rushed upon us, and broke and passed harmless away? which produced the exclamation of our Captain, "Surely there is a power above which is working for us."

And now, rescued from danger and death, by the merciful God to whom we cried in our distress; what shall we render unto him, each one of us, for this his merciful deliverance? Shall it be mere gladness that we have escaped, without gratitude to God? Shall it be the quick oblivion of our distress, and confessions of sin, and resolutions of reformation, and prayers and promises, if God would hear us? Shall the world, its pleasures, business, and love, annihilated in the light of Eternity, return to its strength; and, like the waves we have passed, roll over us, and sweep us away? Have any of you, till now, neglected known duties; will you not from this time resume them? Have you lived habitually, in habitual and known sins; and will you not break them off? I beseech you to do so, by the mercies of God, and the terrors of that day, if you persist, when death will come indeed, and you will then cry, and God will not answer.

Has God, by the trumpet-tongue of wind and wave, preached a sermon to your inmost soul, and swept away the cobweb sophistries of your scepticism? Be honest then, and fear God, and not the sneer of fools; lest, if you relapse, he send upon you strong delusions, that you may be damned, because you have no pleasure in the truth; but have pleasure in unrighteousness. Has he opened the eyes of any of you, the children of Christian parents, to see your sin and danger; and broken up, for a time, your habits of procrastination? How shall you escape if you neglect now so great a salvation? Think what your condition was when the storm commenced; a poor hardened, stupid, procrastinating sinner. Think what, a few days ago, you would have promised and given, to be as safe as you now are. And think what convictions of sin the Spirit of God has wrought on you, by means of the storm. And will you now quench the Spirit, and go back to stupidity and folly? Alas, my friends, if you do so, the Spirit of God may give you up for ever. If you do so, the day may come, when fears and

terrors, surpassing those of the storm, will come upon you in desolation; and when you will again call on God, but he will not answer; and will earnestly seek him, but he will not be found. Now then, is God's time and yours, to seek and secure the salvation of your souls. To-day, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts.

In anticipation of the hour which might sink us together in a watery grave, I had considered what I should say to impenitent sinners like you, when in the jaws of death you should with loud voices cry to me, 'What, what must we do?" and my answer prepared was, Believe instantly on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved; love him, confide in him, and commit your soul to him; and, spite of the strife of elements and a terrific sudden death, you shall be saved; and what I would have said in such an exigency, I now repeat, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved.

Have any of you who are professing Christians, been living in a cold, formal state, conformed to the world in its temper, fashions, amusements, pleasures and business; and have you confessed before God and bewailed these sins, and promised reformation, and found the tokens of pardon in the love of Christ, shed abroad in your souls; go your way then, in grateful love and steadfast obedience, lest, if you now fall away, a worse thing come upon you.

And now let me inquire of my own heart, and of you, my beloved brethren in the ministry, what shall we render to the Lord, and how shall we fill up the measure of our new chartered time? I felt, as a father, the sudden, unlooked for parting with all my children, so long interwoven with every fibre of my heart; and I prayed to the Lord that I might see them again. But, as a minister of Christ, I prayed more fervently to be spared, to do a few more things, which I had projected, for his service and glory. And I go home, resolved to postpone the work no longer, but with double diligence to attempt its completion.

And may it not be well that each of us, by such reminiscences of past neglect, be quickened to redeem the time by double diligence; to clear off the docket of duties neglected, and to fill the remaining page of life with the things which ought to be done? And especially, shall we not give ourselves to prayer for those that sail with us in the ship, that God would begin and consummate a work of grace by his Spirit among them? There has been much prayer already, I trust, for this purpose; and the solemnities of the scenes through which we have passed, have aroused attention and armed conscience with a new power; and produced a new tenderness of mind and of good resolutions; a happy preparation to be consummated by the Spirit in answer to prayer. And shall we not in our general vocation, walk more by faith in things not seen, and less by sight and the influences of time? Be swayed less by ambition and the praise of men; and less by the pleasures of sense, or intellect and taste; and less by things useful, which appertain to

the outworks of religion; and more to our direct preaching and pastoral labors, for the conversion of sinners, and the augmentation of holiness in the Church of God?

With such a mainspring in the hearts, and preaching of God's ministry, revivals will multiply, and the harvest of the world will be planted and reaped; while without, all will be but a splendid formal machinery of unholiness, while the whole world lieth in wickedness, and the battle goes against the Church, and the glorious things spoken concerning Zion are deferred.

Oh, my brethren, what is the itching ear of mortals and the praise of men for brilliant classical sermons and splendid eloquence, which amuses the ear as a pleasant song or skilful music upon an instrument; but which awakens not the conscience, and pricks not the heart, and does not regenerate the soul by the power of the Spirit, and fit it for heaven. God grant that by this storm we may all be made more spiritual, more prayerful, more faithful, and more successful and happy, in winning souls to Christ!

A TIME TO DIE.

ECCLESIASTES III. 2.

Death! 'tis a melancholy day
To those who have no God;
When the poor soul is forced away
To seek her last abode!

"A time to die!" Only one time. In seeking a fortune we may make new trials when we fail in one; but dying is one, solemn, final, eternal experiment! The voyager launches upon a shoreless sea, and returns no more for ever to the land he leaves. "Man dieth, and wasteth away; yea, man giveth up the ghost, and where is he? As the waters fail from the sea, and the flood decayeth and drieth up, so man lieth down and riseth not: till the heavens be no more, they shall not awake, nor be raised out of their sleep!" The tide of life will roll on; the bustle of the world will continue; friends will meet in smiles, and part in tears, as before; flowers will bloom, and stars will shine; empires will arise and fall; the sower will walk forth and scatter in hope; the reaper will gather the sheaf to his bosom; autumn winds will moan, and fierce wintry storms will drive in anger past; the cheerful hearth will chime its crackling notes of comfort, with glad music of fireside joys; but by all this the dead are not disturbed, for "they have no more a portion for ever in anything that is done under the sun." They die, and are laid into the grave, and there all is to them alike.

The storm that wreaks the wintry sky
No more disturbs their calm repose,
Than summer evening's latest sigh
That shuts the rose.

It is somewhat strange that the truth of our mortality is so often repeated in the Bible. "A time to die" is echoed into our ears again and again. It is because we are so prone to put the thought of dying away from us. Every day's experience teaches this truth. The tolling bell, the long funeral train, the garments of mourning, the new made grave, are daily testimonies that it is appointed unto man once to die. And yet, how soon is all forgotten! Scarce has the grass grown upon the grave of the departed, before even many of the relatives have ceased to feel that death is solemn. As when we throw a stone into a stream it causes a momentary sound and agitation of the surface, and then the stone lies silently below while the stream glides on as before; so when one falls by death, it causes a short groan, a tear, and a few thoughts of death and dying; but the sod is closed over, the sleeper lies in silence beneath, and the tide of life and human folly flows madly on!

The world around is also full of admonitory voices. The fading flower, the falling leaf, and the autumnal moans of the dying year all speak of death. We all do fade as a leaf, and as for man, he cometh forth like a flower, and is cut down! But man, bent upon the chase of wealth and honor, heeds not, though the tide of life ebbs fast from his heart.

Let us but step forward a little way in life and our death scenes will be around us. They will surely come. All the solemnity which we have witnessed in the death of others will be experienced by us. Who can realize fully the dread anxiety of the last moment? Solemn twilight, in which the dying rays of earth and the new-born light of heaven are blended! The world and life is full of changes, but there is no change like dying. How far is that moment from us? The answer is, "man also knoweth not his time." A step, as thy soul liveth, is between thee and the grave! "As the fishes that are taken in an evil net, and as the birds that are caught in the snare, so are the sons of men snared in an evil time, when it falleth suddenly upon them." These figures are expressive. The fish *in the net*, while it is yet in the water, thinks he is still at liberty, and while the net is drawn towards the shore he knows not that he is snared, even while he is at the edge of the water he feels still in his element, when lo! at once he is raised above the surface and he is caught. He was in the net before, and was in reality caught, but now he feels it: so man swims in the midst of influences and tendencies which are preparing his dissolution, and when he is thus led to the very shore of eternity he is suddenly snared, and carried away. So also the bird walks upon the snare, and knoweth not that it is for its life, when at once it is caught. So also a blind man walks up to a precipice, and knows not that the next step will dash him upon the rocks below. Great God! how solemn thus to walk on the earth hollow with the caverns of the dead, and not know at what moment the frail shell upon which we stand may break down into eternal burnings! How knowest thou, O man, how far before thee stands

the stake which is to bound the days of your pilgrimage! Who has numbered your days and told you their sum? If you know not, why do you boast yourself of to-morrow, and say it shall be as this day. Why does vain man walk so proudly, so carelessly, and so madly forward, not knowing whether the next foot he puts down will be on earth, in heaven, or in hell! "Seeing his days are determined, the number of his months are with thee, thou hast appointed his bounds that he cannot pass."

How shocking must thy summons be, O death!
To him that is at ease in his possessions:
Who counting on long years of pleasure here,
Is quite unfurnished for that world to come!

There must be some painful things in the death of a wicked man. Many untold horrors must gather around him in that fearful crisis. Of this the countenance of the corpse the moment after death bears awful witness. Who has not observed the difference in the countenance of the recently dead? The infant gathers a smile upon its face in the moment of death which it retains for days. Perhaps that smile is a response to the friendly greetings of angels who are waiting with friendly wing to bear the disembodied spirit to its God. Or it is caused by the sweet presence of the Saviour who stands by, as if kindly to reprove the weeping parents with those blessed words "suffer little children to come unto me." Not only in children, but in aged Christians who died ripe for glory, is the same phenomenon often witnessed. The smile of the spirit when it breaks through into glory is left behind impressed upon the lineaments of the face. But who has not witnessed the haggard and gloomy horror that death leaves behind it on the countenance of the man of sin who dies in despair? It seems, as if by some deep convulsion, the soul were expelled in shattered fragments from the body! The half-opened mouth, and the eyes fixed in wild astonishment denote that the soul at the moment of its exit has been fearfully surprised. And why should it not, when perhaps at the moment it realizes the thrilling truth, "thou art weighed in the balance and art found wanting!" O man of sin, in your life's last twilight hour, you will find around you images ill-boding and fearful, and dark-floating phantoms relieved in lurid fire, will be the landscape sketched out before your dying eyes!

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SERMON CCCCXXXV.

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WESTFIELD, NEW-YORK.

THE RICH FOOL.

And he spake a parable unto them saying, The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully:

And he thought within himself, saying, What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits?

And he said, This will I do: I will pull down my barns, and build greater; and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods.

And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, *and* be merry.

But God said unto him, *Thou* fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be which thou hast provided?

So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God.—Luke xii. 15–21.

Jesus Christ had been preaching to a large assembly, and on themes of the deepest importance. He warned his hearers against indulging in hypocrisy; and he encouraged an honest, open conduct, from the fact that everything is naked and opened to the eye of God; and that all efforts at concealment are vain; that deeds of darkness will stand forth in the light, and words spoken in secret be proclaimed on the house-tops. He dissuaded from the fear of man, and he inculcated the fear of God from the consideration that men could kill only the body, but that God could destroy also the soul. And not only should they stand in awe of the Being who is infinite in power, they should confide also in the providential care of Him who attends on the falling of a sparrow, and who numbers the hairs of our heads. He insisted, also, on the importance of confessing him before men, attaching to it the blessedness of being acknowledged by Him *as his* in the great day before God and angels; while, on the other hand, those who denied him here, he would for ever disown and reject hereafter. He labored to restrain them from speaking one word against the Holy Ghost, by the alarming assurance that such blasphemy would never be forgiven; while, if they spoke advisedly, the Holy Spirit would in return speak for them so readily and wisely, that they need not, when falsely accused, meditate their defence, or concern themselves as to what they should answer.

Such were the high and solemn themes of discourse treated of by Him, who felt their power, and who, in persuasiveness and solemnity, spake as never man spake. And one should, indeed, think it had been enough to have filled their hearts; and, at least for the time, to have divorced them from the trifles of this world; and that those who heard him, if they gave utterance to any sentiment, would have inquired earnestly, "Sir, what must I do to be saved?" Instead of this we hear, "Master, speak to my brother, that he divide the inheritance with me." Oh! the human heart! how fallen, how grovelling; how, on the brink of eternity, it makes excursions after its covetousness! how, in sight of heaven, it layeth up treasures on the earth!

Ambassadors for Christ are sometimes discouraged to find, that while treating with those to whom they are sent on "the grand concerns of judgment and of mercy," while they set before their hearers life and death—while they would awaken them by the terrors of the Lord, and win them to penitence and love by the cross of Jesus, they are discouraged to find that some who they address, sleep; that some are looking around to attract to their persons or their attire, the admiration of their fellow-creatures; and that others are lost in plans of vain amusement or of future gain. But let Christ's ministers remember, "the servant is not greater than his Lord, nor the disciple than his master." And let them not be discouraged, that under circumstances of deepest solemnity, the mouth still speaketh from the abundance of the heart; that dividing inheritances occupies the hearer in this assembly, for it occupied the hearer of the great Teacher, the Lord from heaven. But instead of exclaiming in despair, "I labor in vain, and spend my strength for nought," let the want of success in what has been said increase the preacher's diligence in saying something more. Let him turn the worldly current, which flows out of a worldly heart, round among his audience, that they may see in it the plague of their own hearts; let the exhibitions of depravity thus afforded become a text from which to preach to them all a sermon adapted to their wants. Thus did Jesus. When covetousness protruded itself into the assembly,—when the inheritance was brought in to be divided, he did not say, "Away with it; name it not." But he assured them that that was not a work to which he was appointed; he was not a judge and a divider of their temporal possessions. And he proceeded to say, in a voice of solemn warning, "Take heed and beware of covetousness; for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth." And not only did he announce this truth in the abstract, but he proceeded to illustrate and enforce it, by giving his auditory the history of a man who was rich; a man anxious and selfish, atheistical and short-lived, foolish and ruined.

I have already discoursed to you from the application made to Christ, and his refusal to arbitrate in regard to it. Also from the injunction, "Take heed and beware of covetousness;" setting be-

fore you the nature and the evils of that feeling, and showing you that your best interests consist not in abundance of worldly possessions. And we now proceed to make some improvement of the parable itself by which Christ enforced his previous teaching.

We have before us, then, a rich man with the following traits of character:—He is a *covetous* man; an *anxious* man; a *selfish* man; an *atheistical* man; a *sensual* man; a *dying* man; a *foolish* and *ruined* man. And he is exhibited to show us, that life does not consist in abundance, and that we should avoid covetousness.

A rich man. Look at him. He is what almost all would like to be, and are striving to be. Or, if not striving to be, it is because they despair of success, and not because they would not be rich if they might. A rich man! who would not be glad to stand in his lot? Take heed and beware. Who would not be rejoiced to have a deed of his land? Take heed and beware. Who would not be pleased to count over his money and call it their own? Take heed and beware. Do you wished to be ruined? "No. I wish to be blessed. I wish an abundance that I may do good therewith, that I may augment my own happiness and that of others. If I had a rich man's possessions, I would hope to have also a good man's heart." You would hope so. But let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall. Let him who would be rich ponder the instance before us. It is no caricature; no extreme case; no stretching of the truth to gain a favorite point. It was not the result of disappointed ambition, or of envy, or jealousy that Jesus said, "Take heed, and beware." It was not that he himself could not be rich, that he spake the parable of the rich man. He brings no accusation against the individual of whom he speaks as one guilty of oppression, violence, fraud or falsehood. He simply affirms that he had an abundance, and he describes the effect which abundance had on him. He was a rich man. He was increasing in wealth. His grounds brought forth plentifully. Now mark the effect.

1. It increased his *covetousness*.

He decided to lay it up; to keep it. And such is the common influence of acquisitions. The desire to possess increases as one's possessions increase. The further poverty and want are removed, the more are they dreaded, and the greater is the effort to keep them off. A man does not increase in liberality in proportion as his wealth increases. A man who has "*two mites*" may, perhaps (a *woman* once did), cast them BOTH into the treasury. If he have *two dollars* he may give *one* of them to a brother in want. But when he has two hundred, he will not give half—not more than a fifth, say forty dollars. And when possessed of two thousand, he will not scatter more than a tenth, say two hundred dollars; and when worth twenty thousand, not more than a twentieth, or one thousand dollars; and when his income is two hundred thousand a year, he will not bestow in charity more than a hundreth part, or two thousand dollars a year. So that a poor man is less co-

etous in feeling and in action than the same man will be when rich. Now it is very plain that men are more able to give the same proportion of their wealth to objects of charity or public utility when rich, than when poor. A man of two hundred thousand dollars can certainly part with one hundred thousand better than another worth two dollars can part with one dollar: for so rich a man will still have an abundance left. But you will not persuade him to do it. His covetous disposition will increase with the increase of his wealth. The heavier the purse hangs down the tighter the strings are drawn. The more the hand is employed in grasping, the more difficult it becomes to open it. Sailors, as a class of men, are proverbial for their generosity, but they are generally poor. The islanders of the Pacific Ocean are admired for their generous disposition, but they, too, are poor. There is, I think, a reprehensible improvidence in both these classes. It is desirable that they should be more careful, more saving; but, on the other hand, had they great possessions they would, if true to human nature, as exhibited in the experience of the past, be more covetous as a result.

Let there be a million of dollars entrusted to one man, and let another million be possessed by a thousand men (and that would be one thousand dollars each), and from which would you obtain the greater sum for the spread of the Gospel among the heathen; for public institutions among ourselves, or for any good and philanthropic enterprise? There can be no doubt but that by the thousand families more would be bestowed than by the one family in which the million was concentrated. And yet there would be less ability in the many by all the difference between the expense of supporting a thousand families instead of one. So that, whether you look at the happiness to result from liberality either to the giver or the receiver, or both, pray that no one, not even yourself, may be abundantly rich, for, with the increase of wealth, covetousness increases, of which Jesus says, Take heed and beware. But let us rejoice rather in that order of things which prevails among us, where great estates are uncommon, and a comfortable subsistence is the ordinary lot.

2. Look again at the rich man. HE WAS ANXIOUS.

"What," said he, "shall I do? because I have nowhere to bestow my fruits." And so of almost any man. If he could have his own way; if he could acquire money as fast and as much as he would like, his life would become a burden to him immediately. Suppose you should draw in a lottery, or have bequeathed to you unexpectedly, ten thousand dollars, or fifty thousand dollars, tomorrow. It would destroy your peace. You would be neither able to sleep, nor eat, nor work. You would not know what to do with it. You would fear to keep it with you lest you should be robbed, your life perhaps taken for its sake. You would hesitate to deposit it in the banks, lest they might fail. Investing it in merchandise, you would fear the fluctuations of trade; and in manufactures there would be the danger of flood and fire, and the cupid-

ity of others. You would not like to give it up; you would be perplexed to devise how it might be well managed; and the quietness, comfort and peace which you enjoyed before would forsake you. Were the acquisition gradual, an abundance would be sustained with more equanimity of mind; yet even then would it impose on you much anxiety. If you employ it for yourself, what shall you do with it? If you keep it for your children, what use will they make of it? It may prove their ruin. If you regard it as the Lord's, and employ it for him, there is much responsibility in the trust; so much that it would be an alleviation to have the stewardship transferred from you. And yet we feel as if we would risk the care and the anxiety of riches if we could only obtain them. But they are denied to us. In this Providence is kinder to us than we suppose. Anxious as we sometimes are in our destitution of riches, we should be still more so in the possession;—"what shall I do?" would be asked oftener then than now. Sleepless as you now sometimes are, you would be more restless then. Apprehensive as you now are of some misfortune befalling you, you would be more apprehensive then. Suspicious as you now are of bad designs in others, those suspicions would be augmented with augmented wealth. That contentment which is gain, and that peace which is as a river, they neither of them flow from abundance. "Take heed, then, and beware of covetousness," and be thankful if you are spared the anxiety of the rich man.

3. Look again at the one spoken of in the parable. HE WAS SELFISH.

"I will pull down my barns," said he, "and build greater, and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods. And I will employ them for my own benefit." He forgot that others might need them as well as he. He forgot that the poor were about him, whose wants it was his privilege and duty to supply. He did not consider that it was more blessed to give than to receive. He decided to devote all that he had to his own gratification. "Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years, take thine ease, eat, drink and be merry." Selfishness, we know, is not peculiar to the rich. It is the common and abounding property of the race. It is a feeling which wealth has no tendency to subdue, but rather to strengthen; for selfishness, self-importance, natural to all, is fostered by the deference and flattery paid to the affluent; and from the consideration which wealth confers, and the indulgence it obtains for one's various desires, the rich are tempted to feel that the world was specially made for them; or, to say the least, that their happiness and welfare are much more important than that of others.

The large and generous hearts which extend abroad far and wide, and embrace in their sympathies all mankind, are hearts, generally speaking, free from the pressure of abundance—hearts that are not clasped about with gold and silver girdles; and we say, in looking at such, "What a pity they had not a storehouse of blessings equal to the greatness of their souls; for then would their

generosity be nobly manifested." But we ought to consider that it is scarcely possible for an eminently benevolent man to be a very rich man; for how, among us, can an estate be collected but by the greatest carefulness; how but by keeping what one has already, and by getting all that he can? How, I was about to ask, can one become rich but by either defrauding others, or by defrauding himself? And he who should wrong either himself or others in obtaining money would, of course, be destitute of that benevolence which would, after it was obtained, expend the money with a conscientious, god-like generosity. So, then, a wide estate and a magnanimous heart are not often possessed by the same man; and there can be, there ought to be no hesitation as to which should be preferred. The selfish feeling which is our ruin, is strengthened by riches. Avoid, therefore, riches, which endanger benevolence; and by fostering selfishness, jeopardise the soul.

4. Look again at the rich man. HE WAS ATHEISTICAL.

He says, "This will *I* do. *I* will pull down, *I* will build, *I* will bestow *my* goods." He does not say, "I will do this or that, *if the Lord will.*" He does not speak of himself at all as a steward, and the Lord as the great proprietor. He does not say, I shall live to enjoy these possessions laid up, for many years, if God prolongs my life, and blesses me in the use of *his* fruits and *his* goods. God seems not to have been in all, nor in any, of his thoughts. "*My* wisdom and *my* power hath gotten me these. Who is the Lord that I should remember him, and regard myself and my goods as belonging to him?" This, my hearers, is unhappily one of the ill effects of riches. The gifts of our Divine benefactor, which should provoke our gratitude, and turn our hearts strongly to him, render us but the more ungrateful, and drive us farther and farther away. This is, indeed, strange, but it is as manifest as strange; and it proves that we are depraved beings, indeed, that prosperity should so injure us; and consequently, that riches should not be coveted and eagerly sought, inasmuch as our injury and not our welfare would be thus promoted. For riches promote atheism. They are put in God's stead. They are idolized. Supplying our wants through the medium of money, we forget to look up to the Father of lights, from whom cometh down every good and perfect gift. Looking to money for a supply of our tables, we forget to pray to our Father in heaven, "Give us this day our daily bread." Looking to our wealth to provide medicine and nursing when sick, and human counsel when in perplexity and doubt, we forget Him in whose hand are our life and breath, and whose are all our ways. Riches estrange the heart from God, by placing themselves in God's stead, by being trusted in, and hence that solemn and alarming assurance of Jesus Christ, "Verily I say unto you, that a rich man shall hardly enter into the kingdom of heaven." "And again I say unto you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God." Paul exhorts the rich to disperse abroad their money, to be rich

in good works, not to trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us all things richly to enjoy.

Happy, indeed, it is for this country, God loves us too well to prosper us according to our hearts' desire; to allow us, without any check, to accumulate worldly possessions, for the highway to abundance is the highway to atheism. The clouds that brood over us, and on which we think we see written, *hard times*, have blessings within them: for we may see there the hand and the face of the Lord God;—we may there behold His throne, and bow before it. The race in which gold is run for as the prize, is a race away from God; and those who run that race throw aside their hindrances; they cast away their Sabbath, their family altars, their closets, and their integrity; and you will, all along the course, find the fragments of the Ebenezer altars, "Hitherto hath the Lord helped me," and here and there lies the wreck of faith and a good conscience. The race after riches which this country was running till out of breath, in 1836, and about that time, was a race towards infidelity; the world was not only in it, but the church was running; and, as I said before, God loved this country too well to give us up to our heart's lusts. Hence he came down upon our track; he reversed the engines; he took off the chariot wheels; headed the boats toward shore, and turned the cities which sprang up in a night in the wilderness, back again in a night into a solitary place; and he set the tooth of the moth to eat up our silk and purple, and the owls tenanted our half-finished palaces, and "Ichabod" was written on the walls; and over and above all was a writing for the sons of men to read, written, as it were, by a quill plucked from the head of Nebuchadnezzar when his hair grew as eagle's feathers, "The Most High God liveth and ruleth, all whose ways are truth and judgment, and those that walk in pride he is able to abase." For, previously to the abasement of the king of Babylon, he was prospered, had become rich, and withal forgotten God. For, as he walked in the palace of his kingdom, he said, "Is not this great Babylon that I have built for the house of the kingdom, by the might of *my power* and for the honor of *my majesty*." While the word was in the king's mouth, there fell a voice from heaven, saying, "O king Nebuchadnezzar, to thee it is spoken, The kingdom is departed from thee: and they shall drive thee from men, and thy dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field: they shall make thee to eat grass as oxen, and seven times shall pass over thee until thou know that the Most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will."

Thus was he cured of his atheism by a singular humiliation. And well it is for us, and for this nation, if we can be brought to feel that the Most High ruleth, short of being transformed into beasts, and consigned to eat grass and to be wet with the dew of heaven. Learn from the experience of the past, from the teachings of God and of Jesus Christ, learn not to be rich, as you would

dread to be without God in the world; as you would avoid the everlasting doom of an idolater.

5. The rich man was a SENSUAL MAN. He provided for his bodily gratification. There is nothing of a spiritual or an intellectual character in his history. Eating, drinking, and merriment, these are the three; they constitute his Trinity. For these he planned, executed, and laid up his fruits and his goods. It would seem that he hesitated thus to sensualize himself, and he varnished and whitewashes the sepulchre by talking to his soul. "Soul," said he, "soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years, take thine ease, eat, drink and be merry;" as if his soul could eat the grain in his barns, and drink the wine in his cellar. Sensual as he was, he was ashamed to think that he was making all this provision for his body, and placing the fountain of his happiness in his belly. But so it was, and so it is. Sensuality is the pearl of great price, the one thing needful, the *summum bonum* in the estimation of many. They may flatter themselves that they are not brutish by getting up an address to their souls; and they may say, "Soul, I have built thee a new house; soul, I have bought thee a new garment; soul, I have filled for thee the decanter; soul, I have provided for thee a mistress. Soul, thou hast much goods, eat, drink and be merry." Sensual men may talk thus, they may thus pain the sepulchre and sweeten the dead bones and uncleanness within, but it is a vain process, they shall perish in their deceivings, and their souls so indebted to them for all this provision, shall by-and-by assert their rights, and avenge their wrongs. The soul brutalized; the soul drunk; the soul a glutton; the soul a debauchee, the soul ruined; the soul lost; the soul damned! The soul which was made for immortality and for holiness; the soul dissatisfied with all that is earthly; the soul which should rise and commune with God, and sing with angels, to be cheated and mocked with a discourse about barns, and eating and drinking and carousing! My hearers, do you live a spiritual or do you live a sensual life? You need not be rich in order to take thought only for the body. The rich and the poor, the high and the low, may debase their immortal natures to a condition of shame and disgrace; and in that shame and degradation are all found who fix their desires and terminate their hopes on the pleasures of sense, who labor in vain to satisfy their immortal spirits with created good. There is in reserve for such folly and sin an awful retribution. It maketh haste;—for, in the sixth place,

6. The rich man was a DYING MAN,—a serious attribute of his nature which he seemed to forget, as if his riches were a shield against the shaft of death. His ground was productive, and he decided to enjoy the fruits of it *for a long time*, "*many years.*" But his new barns were not built,—he had only time to plan them. His fruits and goods were not bestowed,—he had only time to consider where he should put them. He had not eaten and drunken

and made merry; he had only time to decide that he would do so. *He* said, "Soul, a long life is before thee." *God* said, "This night thou shalt die." Thou wilt not pull down thy barns, but death will take down thine earthly tabernacle. Thou wilt not build greater storehouses, but the house of the grave will be made for thee to-morrow. Thou wilt not eat, drink and be merry on that which is prepared for thy table, but the worms shall banquet and revel on thy body. That soul which thou didst sensualize is about to be required by the Father of Spirits. Whose those things will be which thou hast provided, thou canst not tell; but be sure of this, they are no longer thine. Thy days are numbered, thy purposes are extinct, the grave waits for thee, death is at the door; this night thou shalt die.

7. He was a FOOLISH MAN. He lived as a fool, and died as he lived. This is not an uncharitable opinion of ours. It is the character given him from heaven. It is the decision of the throne. GOD said unto him, "Thou fool." A covetous fool; an anxious fool; a selfish fool; an atheistic fool; a sensual fool; a dying fool; ruined, because he laid up treasure for himself, and was not rich toward God. He has gone. We leave him, my friends, and turn to you, and ask, are there any in this assembly like him? any possessing his character, and hastening to his destiny? Are you laying up treasure for yourself, while yet you are not rich toward God? Thou art the man! Thy ground may be fruitful, but thy heart is ungrateful. Thy house may be built, but the family altar is not erected; or, if erected, the acceptable sacrifice is not offered. You may have a reception room for mortals, but no closet nor audience chamber where you meet the immortal Creator. "*Not rich toward God!*" Toiling till weary for love of money; never resting in the love of God. Affluent in sorrow for temporal losses; not rich in repentance toward God. Anxious for earthly possessions, but not at all anxious to lay up treasure in heaven. Rich in the fruits of the flesh, but poor and destitute in the fruits of the Spirit. Worldly and irreligious. Dying, but unprepared for death. You have seen the rich man of whom Christ spake. If so, you have seen yourself. You have seen his end. See there your own. "*So is he,*" of this assembly, "*who layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God.*" A fool in life, a fool in death; a fool lost and ruined to all eternity.

SERMON CCCCXXXVI.

BY THE REV. GEORGE A. CALHOUN,

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THE STONE ROLLED FROM THE DOOR OF THE SEPULCHRE.

Who will roll us away the stone from the door of the sepulchre?
MARK XVI. 3.

THE chamber where a companion endured the pangs of death, and the spot where his remains were deposited, are places of peculiar interest to surviving friends. They are cherished in long and affectionate remembrance, and are visited with mournful pleasure. They call to recollection many sacred associations, on which the mind inclines to dwell, and with which the heart is disposed to sympathize. You see the widow, or the mother, repair to the grave of her beloved husband, or to the lonely place where reposes in silence the body of her affectionate child; there she stands in sober reflection, gazing on the green grass which waves over the sacred deposit, till nature finds a sad relief; then she slowly passes away.

Contemplating these operations of sympathy with the dead, it is not strange, that the place where Jesus was crucified, and the tomb where his body was laid, have been considered as sacred by his friends, and by some employed in a superstitious and idolatrous manner. Calvary, and the tomb of Joseph, must have been places of peculiar interest to the disciples and early Christians. They doubtless often visited these places. And we are informed, that at the end of the Sabbath, immediately after the crucifixion, Mary Magdalene, and the other Mary, resorted to the tomb of Joseph. In visiting the tomb at this period, their design was to embalm the body of Christ. Hence, an entrance into the sepulchre was necessary; but they knew not how to accomplish it. A great stone had been placed at the door of the sepulchre; this stone had been sealed by the enemies of Christ, and a guard, as is supposed, of sixty men stationed around the tomb, to prevent the removal of Christ's body. While these pious females were on the way to the sepulchre, and were desirous of thus manifesting their respect and affection for their Lord, they saw in prospect a serious difficulty in the way of accomplishing their purpose. Hence they said one to another, "Who will roll us away the stone from the door of the sepulchre?" But when they arrived at the place, they found the difficulty re-

moved. God had sent his angel from heaven, whose countenance was as lightning, whose raiment was as white as snow, whose descent was attended with an earthquake, and whose presence caused the keepers to become as dead men. This angel had rolled away the stone from the door of the sepulchre; and the body of Jesus, instead of needing sweet spices for its preservation, had burst asunder the iron bands of death, assumed a celestial and incorruptible nature, and departed from its place of confinement.

Prospective difficulties in the path of duty, persons often find removed, when they come to the place of meeting them.

Before illustrating and confirming this sentiment, I would observe, that we are not to be reckless of the moral consequences of our conduct; nor are we to be inattentive to difficulties in the way of discharging duty. Indeed, many persons err, and fail in accomplishing a good object, in consequence of not duly considering the obstacles in the way of its accomplishment. "A prudent man foreseeth the evil and hideth himself; but the simple pass on and are punished." In the way of accomplishing any great and good object there are difficulties which must be removed; there is a stone at the door of the sepulchre which must be rolled away. And there is often a failure in doing good because this fact is not recognized. And some of the most serious obstacles in the way of accomplishing a good design, result from the indiscretion of those who are in heart benevolent. They do not contemplate and shape their conduct in view of existing difficulties, and hence they are defeated and the more discerning embarrassed. If we look at the way in which the most useful succeed in their works of faith and labors of love, and the difficulties which they successfully encounter, we shall perceive, that not only the harmlessness of the dove is required, but the wisdom of the serpent. If we look at the example of Christ and the Apostles, we shall perceive, not only the necessity of *action*, but of *caution* in directing our conduct. And if we would serve our Lord and master faithfully and successfully, we must be in the exercise of all that discretion and prudence which shall enable us to discover what is fit to be done under existing circumstances. But in the path of duty there will be difficulties in prospect, which may appear to be insurmountable; and my design in this discourse is to encourage persons to go forward in the discharge of duty notwithstanding these apparent obstacles in the way. For prospective difficulties in the path of duty, persons often find removed, when they come to the place of meeting them.

This may be inferred,

I. *From the experience of God's people.* Abraham, in obeying a divine command, saw serious difficulties in prospect. God had promised to make of him a great nation—to bless those who blessed him, and curse those who cursed him—to multiply his posterity as the stars of heaven—and, by causing him to be the progenitor of the Messiah, to bless all the nations of the world in him. Mor

than ninety years of the patriarch's life had passed away ere the birth of Isaac, the son in whom all these precious promises centered. And after the child of promise had become a lad, God said to Abraham: "Take now thy son, thine only son, Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah, and offer him there for a burnt-offering." How could that tender father bind his only son, whom he loved, lay him on the altar, take away his life, and see him a victim consumed with fire? And were his parental feelings overcome, how could the promise of a numerous nation be accomplished, and of a Messiah, in whom all the families of the earth were to be blessed, as the descendant of Isaac? There were indeed difficulties in prospect. But Abraham staggered not at the promise, accounting that God was able to raise up Isaac, even from the dead. And notwithstanding the difficulties, he went forward in the path of duty. He took his beloved son and servants, and performed a journey of three days towards the place of the sacrifice. Then on the third day, Abraham lifted up his eyes and saw the place afar off. And Abraham said to the young men: Abide ye here, and I and the lad will go yonder and worship, and come again to you. And Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering and laid it upon Isaac his son; and took the fire in his hand, and a knife; and they went both of them together. And Isaac spake unto Abraham, his father, and said, My father; and he said, Here am I, my son. And he said, Behold, the fire and the wood; but where is the lamb for a burnt-offering? And Abraham said, My son, God will provide for himself a lamb for a burnt-offering. So they went both of them together. And they came to the place, which God had told him of; and Abraham built him an altar there, and laid the wood in order, and bound Isaac his son, and laid him on the altar upon the wood. And now he had arrived at the place of meeting the difficulty—it was a serious difficulty—now was the trying moment. And Abraham stretched forth his hand and took the knife to slay his son. As he did this in obedience to God's command, all difficulties vanished. The stone was rolled away from the door of the sepulchre. The angel of God was there to stay the hand which was about to inflict the stroke of death. And Abraham was more richly blessed in consequence of this trial of his faith.

When Moses was called of God to deliver the children of Israel from Egyptian bondage, he saw many difficulties in prospect. "Behold," said he, "they will not believe me, nor harken to my voice." And when he was assured, that he would meet no embarrassment from that quarter, "Moses said, O, my Lord, I am not eloquent .... but I am slow of speech and slow of tongue." But the difficulties which Moses saw in prospect were all removed, when he came to the places of meeting them.

The spies, who were sent out to examine the land of Canaan, caused the children of Israel to tremble in view of difficulties in the way of possessing the promised land. They could not obey

God. "The people," said the spies, "are strong, the cities are walled and very great, and we saw giants. And all the congregation wept and said, Would God we had died in the land of Egypt! or would God we had died in the wilderness!" But when Israel had gained an entrance into the land of promise—when at Jericho they arrived at the place of meeting the expected difficulties, they had nothing to do, but to encompass the city with rams' horns, and the strong walls were prostrated, and the sons of Anak were subdued. The stone was rolled away from the door of the sepulchre.

The Jews, in the days of Esther, were reduced to the greatest extremity. Their very existence, and that of the church, appeared to be on the eve of extermination. But they prayed and fasted—they went on in the path of duty—and when the period arrived for meeting their expected trial—the day appointed for their slaughter came; it was a day of joy and gladness. All difficulties vanished. There was no stone remaining at the door of the sepulchre.

The three pious Jews who were cast into the fiery furnace, were beset with difficulties. They must be guilty of idolatry and greatly offend God, or incur the wrath of the king, and suffer death. From the one or the other of them, there appeared to be no escape. But when the time arrived, the stone was rolled away from the door of the sepulchre. They pursued the path of duty, and we know not but the furnace heated one seven times more than it was wont to be, was as comfortable to them, as would have been the palace of the king. When Nebuchadnezzar asked them, "Who is that God that shall deliver you out of my hand?" They replied, "We are not careful to answer thee in this matter. If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of thy hand, O king." And he did deliver them. When they came to the place of meeting the difficulty, they found it removed.

And so with regard to Daniel. He must neglect the duty of prayer and offend God, or be cast into the lion's den. "Now when Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went into his house; and his windows being open in his chamber towards Jerusalem, he kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed and gave thanks before his God, as he did aforetime." He obeyed God, and we know not but he was as joyful in the den of lions as he would have been an equal in the presence of monarchs.

Often did the Apostles and primitive Christians find prospective difficulties in the path of duty removed when they arrived at the place of meeting them. Prayer was a key which opened the doors of the prison, and set Peter at liberty. And Paul and Silas, in prison and in chains, were, at midnight, joyful and praising God.

Were we to trace the history of churches, or of individual believers, time would fail us in exhibiting the many instances of the removal of difficulties when the period of meeting them arrived. The history of any one church will disclose the fact, that God ha-

done better for that church than was feared by its distrustful members. When seasons of darkness came, and scenes of trial were in prospect, and the day of calamity was apparently near at hand, then the clouds were scattered, the bow of promise was seen, and the sun of prosperity was resplendent. An examination of the history of a church of long continuance, in reference to this particular, might be deeply interesting and quite profitable, but we will rather refer to the personal experience of the believer.

The believer, ere he was born of the Spirit, was brought to feel his need of pardoning mercy, and of becoming reconciled to God; but he saw difficulties in the way. There was a stone at the door of the sepulchre which must be rolled away, and a guard of sixty men which must be overcome. The ridicule or displeasure of friends, self-denying duties demanded of Christ's followers, the want of that deep conviction of sin which was supposed to be essential, and the peculiar circumstances in which the individual was placed, each presented its difficulties. But most of all, the truth, that the sinner is dependent on God for a new heart, and that "God will have mercy on whom he will have mercy;" these sealed the stone and set the watch, that access could not be gained. You remember, my Christian friend, how you felt when you were under the strivings of the Holy Spirit. In the way of your becoming reconciled to God, and interested in the covenant of his love, there were apparently many and serious difficulties. You felt that some great thing must be effected before you could become a follower of Christ. But how was it, when the time arrived for meeting the difficulties? When you was willing to meet these apparent difficulties, did you find them? How was the sepulchre when you came there? At its door was there a stone sealed, and around it an armed band? No, the stone was rolled away, the keepers had become as dead men, and the body of Christ, for its preservation, needed not the application of sweet spices. All apparent difficulties were removed. The ridicule and displeasure of friends presented no obstacle in your way. The demand of duty was no hindrance. And did the want of deeper conviction of sin present a difficulty in your way? Did your dependence on the sovereign mercy and grace of God, keep you one moment from embracing the Saviour of sinners? Rather when you came to the place—that is, when you were willing to yield yourself unreservedly into the hands of God, and in spirit say:

> "Lo! glad I come; and thou, blest Lamb,
> Shall take me to thee as I am;
> Nothing but sin I thee can give,
> Nothing but love shall I receive;"

did you not find all obstacles taken away, and wonder that you should have ever imagined their existence?

And let believers say what has been their experience on this subject since their hopeful conversion to God. When you con-

templated making a public profession of your faith in Christ, perhaps you saw difficulties in your way; and have you experienced the trials attending this duty which you feared? Rather has not experience convinced you, that far greater embarrassments would have been endured, had you neglected that duty? Some of you may have had trials in prospect in relation to the duty of prayer, but how was it when you came to the place of meeting these trials? When you determined to discharge faithfully the duty of prayer, and went forward in the strength of the Lord, did you find a stone at the door of the sepulchre? When you have in humility and love reproved a brother in Christ, or exhorted a sinner to repent of his transgressions and turn to God, have you found all the obstacles in your way which you had expected to find? In relation to the claims of benevolence, when you cheerfully discharged your duty in this particular, did you suffer the inconvenience which you may have feared?

In short, does not the history of every church, and the experience of every child of God testify, *that prospective difficulties in the path of duty, persons often find removed when they come to the place of meeting them?*

This may be inferred,

II. *From the promises of God.* The promises of God should not inspire us with a false confidence, blind us to the consequences of our conduct, or render us remiss in endeavors to know the will of God. We may be presumptuous in our reliance on the government and promises of God. The fact, that the Lord reigns, should be a terror to all who are not found in the path of duty. He has reigned over individuals and destroyed them, and over idolatrous and infidel nations, and has dashed them in pieces like a potter's vessel. And the promises of God would not have sustained the Son of man, had he cast himself from the pinnacle of the temple. The adversary would inspire us with a false confidence. To be interested in, and personally benefitted by, the government and promises of God, we must be found in the path of duty; we must not mark out our own course—we must not stand still—we must go forward under divine direction. And doing thus, we may derive strength and courage from the promises of God.

God has, in the Scriptures, given assurance of a special providence over those who obey his commands. What Azariah said to Asa, may be said to any person: "The Lord is with you while ye be with him; and if ye seek him, he will be found of you; but if ye forsake him, he will forsake you." When Samuel was exhorting Israel to faithfulness in the service of God, he said, "For the Lord will not forsake his people for his great name's sake, because it hath pleased the Lord to make you his people." The Psalmist exclaims, "The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? the Lord is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?" Christ, after directing his disciples what to do, said to them: "Lo, I am with you alway, even to the end of the world."

Now with the promises of God before us, are we not to expect, that prospective difficulties in the path of duty persons will often find removed when they come to the place of meeting them? The promises of God assure us, that obstacles in the path of duty will be taken away, or grace will be granted which will enable us to surmount them, and profit by them. It is true, that Paul, notwithstanding he had sought the Lord thrice for its removal, was caused to endure the thorn in the flesh; but the grace of God was sufficient for him, and he rejoiced more in the grace bestowed, than he would have done, had the thorn been removed.

Let the path of duty be plain, and we need not fear to pursue it. Though mountains interpose, they will be removed, or we shall have strength to ascend them, and profit by the ascent. When God commands, and promises to the obedient his support, what occasion is there for fear, for hesitancy, or for reluctance, in obeying the command. When Moses exclaimed, "O, my Lord, I am not eloquent," he appears to have forgotten whence came the speech of man, and that since God was to be with him, defects in natural endowments would not be essential. Relying on the promises of God, the believer may go forward in duty with unwavering confidence, that whatever difficulties appear before him, he will often find them removed when he comes to the place of meeting them. For ground of confidence he has the experience of God's people of all ages, and the promises of God.

It is of great importance, that the subject under consideration be duly regarded. Professors of religion have suffered much in peace of mind, and in efficiency of Christian character, because, by apparent difficulties in prospect, they have been deterred from going forward in duty, when, had they trusted in God and gone forward, they would not have experienced the difficulties anticipated. For illustration, many instances might be noticed.

Here is a professor of religion, who had long remained silent on the subject of religion, and who had never led in social prayer because of apparent difficulties in his way; but so soon as he determined, in the strength of the Lord, to do his duty in these particulars, he found comfort where he expected pain. Here is another professor of religion, who neglects the duty of family prayer. He is restless, shifting, inconsistent, disarmed of the weapons of a holy warfare with sin and Satan, and indeed unhappy; but were he, with reliance on God, to commence the duty of family prayer, he would find no stone at the door of the sepulchre—difficulties would vanish away, and he would assume a different character, and be more useful and happy. Here is another professed follower of Christ, who has never taken an open, decided, and bold stand in the cause of his Master. He is influenced by the fear of man, and he is suffering in all his spiritual interests. Oh, if he feared God more, and were more cheerful and prompt in his obedience, he would not find insurmountable obstacles in his way. He would experience the pleasure of an approv-

ing conscience, the smiles of his heavenly Father, and of a surer title to eternal life. Many there are, who would anoint the body of Christ; but they stop and inquire, "Who will roll us away the stone from the door of the sepulchre?" Had they humbly, prayerfully, and faithfully pursued the path of duty, they would have found the stone rolled away, and the body risen from the dead. We can not estimate the loss sustained by professed followers of Christ, resulting from the want of confidence in God, and of decided and fearless action in his service.

But the personal injury experienced by those who are deterred from the faithful discharge of duty, in view of prospective difficulties, is only a small part of that which we are called to regret, and lament before God. A world in sin and in ruins is deeply affected. Had all, who have been hopefully redeemed to God by the blood of Christ, and in a measure sanctified by the Holy Spirit, taken a decided and bold stand with the faithful of the Lord, and gone forward in duty, with reliance on heaven, what would now have been the state of the church on the earth? And how much would have, through the grace of God, been accomplished for the salvation of the millions who are in sin, and in the region and shadow of death? But a want of cheerfulness, promptness, and moral courage in obeying God, has been manifested, and the painful consequences are seen and felt. Everywhere sin prevails, Satan triumphs, and condemned sinners are heedlessly pursuing their dark and crooked course, on to death and hell. Would it be thus, were the friends of God faithful in learning the will of heaven, and fearless in duty? Now, in consequence of apparent difficulties which agitate and discourage them, they suffer in their spiritual interests; their companions, families, acquaintances, and other fellow-beings suffer a loss which cannot be estimated—a loss which may be sustained for ever.

Christian Friends, where God directs, there go. What God commands, that do. Let nothing deter you. Though you are surrounded with many and serious difficulties, go forward. God will help you. He will see that the stone is rolled away from the door of the sepulchre. Though you have a mountain on each hand, an enemy in pursuit, and a sea before you, trusting in God, go forward. A path will be opened before you. Obstacles shall be removed, or you shall have grace to encounter them and profit by them. And while the fearful and disobedient shall lament their folly, you shall rejoice and triumph in the Lord.

Would that the impenitent would be persuaded, that the stone was actually rolled away from the door of the sepulchre. When the sleeping Conqueror arose, and burst the bands of death, the gates of heaven were left open, and entrance into the kingdom of God made easy. And so soon as sinners will come to the place of submission to God, they will find every difficulty in the way of their salvation removed. It is true, that they are dependent on the grace of God, and they must know it, and must feel it. Mary

Magdalene and the other Mary could not have rolled away the stone from the door of the sepulchre; but hastening to the place, they found it removed. And sinners will find every obstacle which bars their way to God and heaven removed, when they present themselves to God a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable in his sight. And they who will make this offering now, shall rejoice evermore in a crucified, risen, and glorified Saviour, as their Lord and their God.

THE KIND OF MINISTRY WANTED.

The ministry should not only be endowed with the genial spirit of the age, but should be able to meet the new questions that are coming up in every generation, and to apply to them, in view of an intelligent community, the great principles of religion. In the time when Antony began to make the monastic system popular in Egypt, and Benedict in Italy, what was needed was a ministry so imbibed with sound theology that *that* question—the great question of the age—could be met and settled by the true principles of the gospel. In the time when an undue respect began to be shown to relics, to consecrated temples, and to burial places, and the church was degenerating into a base superstition, what was demanded was such a ministry as could have met *that* question, and apply to it the principles of sound philosophy and theology. So in every age, there are new questions that are to be met by the ministry; and unless they show themselves competent to apply to them the principles of their religion, they fall behind their generation, and show themselves incompetent to their work. Never were more such questions started than in this age, and never was there more need of studying profoundly the great principles of religion, by those who take upon themselves to be the guides of the public mind. The true questions which agitate this age are not those of the monastic system or the crusades, or the points mooted by the "angelic doctors" Aquinas and Scotus; nor are they the questions about the "three orders" in the ministry, or the apostolic succession, or the inquiries that have been started at Oxford. There has been, indeed, and is, an attempt to foist these inquiries of bygone years upon this generation, and it is well to be prepared to meet them; but those are not the things that are moving the mind of the world in this age. How limited, after all, is the circle which these inquiries can agitate! How few of the race at large can be interested in the question about the "three orders," or the "succession!" There are deeper things moving on the public heart. Great questions of liberty, of government, of education, of freedom of thought, of temperance, of right to the Bible, of exclusiveness, of war and peace, of the social organization, of the adaptation of the Christian religion to man, are the points which

this age, as such, is looking at; and a man may be an entire master of all the theology that can be made to converge around the questions that have come up at Oxford, and yet never awake to the inquiry whether he is in the eleventh or nineteenth century; and while he is re-arguing points which have been determined ages ago, society shall move on in strides which he will never dream of overtaking, towards the point which it is destined yet to reach, and all they of Oxford, and all who moot similar questions to those agitated there, shall be left far behind.

But further. A preacher should not only be able to appreciate his age, and to come up to it in adapting his instructions to the great questions which are started in the times in which he lives, but he should be in *advance* of his age. He should be able intelligently to take positions to which society in its progress has not yet come up, but which it will most certainly reach in its onward progress. He should be able to throw himself into the future, and, taking his stand on great principles which are to live in all times, and which are yet to be regarded as settled principles, he should be prepared to defend them, and to do what in him lies to bring the world to embrace them. There are not a few such in the Bible —in the comparatively unexplored views of divine truth, which are to be brought out, and which are to make the world what it is yet to be. Whether those positions have been held in the past or not; whether his own age adopts and practices on them or not, he who preaches the theology of the Bible should defend them, and should be able to show what important changes the fair application of the principles of the New Testament would make in the world. The men who have done much for the race have gone in advance of their age; they have maintained positions, often in the midst of much persecution, which society had not yet reached, but to which it was destined yet to come, and have shown their greatness, and their sagacity, and their acquaintance with the oracles of truth, by being able to take such advanced positions, and by holding and defending them in the face of the sneers and the frowns of the world. Such men were Luther and Knox; such men were the Puritans and the Pilgrims; such a man, in relation to the rights of conscience, to war and slavery, was William Penn. Thus, now, we are to take our stations on the watch-towers, and defend not only what has been defended, and maintain not only what has been inwrought into the texture of society, but we are to search out and maintain those great principles which *will* prevail in the world's millennium, and to which, though slowly, yet most certainly, the world is advancing. The theology to be preached is not only that which has been settled as true in past times by experience; not only that which is fitted to the great questions of these times, but that which will be fitted to the state of the world when society shall have made its highest progress, and shall have reached the point on which the eyes of prophets and apostles were fixed.—*Rev. Mr. Barnes.*

THE DOOR OF HOPE CLOSED.

"It will be a most fearful thing to him who finds at last the door of hope and of heaven closed and barred against him for ever. Let the impenitent reader of this seriously revolve in his mind this dreadful thought, and imagine the possibility of the tremendous result in his own case, till his heart deeply feels the force of the momentous truth.

Few men have had deeper experience than Bunyan, or have been able to present these affecting truths more vividly or impressively before the mind. In his work on the unspeakable loss of the soul, Bunyan writes the following solemn dialogue between God and the lost sinner. After recounting the conduct of the sinner, and his treatment of the great offers of salvation, Bunyan says:

Of all these things God takes notice, writes them down, and seals them up for the time to come, and will bring them out, and spread them before them, saying, I have called, and you have refused; I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded; I have exercised patience, and gentleness, and long suffering towards you, and in all that time you despised me, and cast me behind your back; and now the time, and the exercise of my patience, when I waited upon you, and suffered your manners, and did bear your contempts and scorns, is at an end; wherefore I will now arise, and come forth to the judgment that I have appointed.

But, Lord, saith the sinner, we turn now.

But now, saith God, turning is out of season; the day of my patience is ended.

But, Lord, says the sinner, behold our cries.

But you did not, says God, behold nor regard my cries.

But, Lord, saith the sinner, let our beseeching find place in thy compassions.

But, saith God, I also beseeched, and I was not heard.

But, Lord, says the sinner, our sins lie hard upon us.

But I offered you pardon when time was, says God, and then you did utterly reject it.

But, Lord, says the sinner, let us therefore have it now.

But now the door is shut, saith God.

And what then? Why, then, by way of retaliation, God will serve them as they have served him; and so the winding up of the whole will be this—they shall have like for like. Time was when they would have none of him, and now God will have none of them. Time was when they cast God behind their back, and now he will cast away their soul. Time was when they would not heed his calls, and now he will not heed their cries.

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